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CONTENTS

George P. Elliott: *The Sky and a Goat* 147

E. E. Cummings: *Poem* 157

A. R. Ammons: *Mountain Liar* 158
Ritual for Eating the World . . . 159
Hymn V 160
Hymn VI 160
Hymn X 162

Ralph Robin: *Scott Burgess and His Friends* . . . 163

Gerald Fitzgerald: *My Father Survived Many New England Falls* 176

Paul Cordell: *The Three Children* 177

Harold Fleming: *Earth Makes the Spirit Small* . . . 178

Chester E. Eisinger: *Saul Bellow: Love and Identity* . . 179

Thomas Williams: *Betsy and the Blackbird* 204

Susan Smith: *The Bird is Ancient Foliage* 205

Elizabeth Bartlett: *Ascetic* 205

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ACCENT
A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT:

The Sky and a Goat

I no longer regret my desert puberty, though at the time I thought it hard to have so little Nature to live among. Of course, I knew in a general way that lizards and rocks and dry weather were nature too, but they weren't what I had in mind; and our striking events, earthquakes, dust storms, cloudbursts gullying the fields, three-day north winds, were acts less of Nature than of God. Nature was skylarks, nightingales, daisies pied, wild thyme, storms at sea, rustic maids, meads; when melancholy, one could wander cloud-like among Nature or, if it was evening, weep against her bosom; Nature flourished in England, Greece, and Italy, and generally around the Mediterranean, there was a good deal in the Rhine Valley and more in the Alps, some in Arabia and New England, and scarcely any in such places as Brazil or Australia. In Southern California, crouched behind Mt. San Jacinto from a really deadly desert, we had tumbleweeds instead of broom, buzzards instead of ravens, greasewood instead of lilies, nothing fell in the fall, it did not snow in the winter, we had to irrigate even in the spring; and the only Nature I recognized was the sky and the heavenly bodies.

Shelley, my most adored, sent me to Plato, and from "The Symposium" I learned about the ladder of love, which I resolved to climb.

But I found most of the rungs missing, the rungs that should have been provided by Nature.

We had no lawn; my mother's synecdoche of a garden was a line of geraniums on the shady side of the kitchen. Our house was at one corner of a carob plantation. Like a lion farm, an ostrich farm, an alligator ranch, a stucco Chinese temple movie house, a town near Hollywood named Tarzana, this plantation was a creature of Southern California fantasy. The carob, a native to the eastern Mediterranean, produced a brown, dry pod which had been (so we were spieled) the locust which John the Baptist ate in the wilderness and which furthermore was so highly nutritious that it would be prized as a health food; for reasons such as these carob was sure to have a booming future in California. But the tap root of our imported carobs, long before it got down to water, hit the granite hardpan lying just below the surface of our desert and curled up like a pig's tail, so that our trees were a scrubby five feet tall instead of a luxuriant thirty-five; nor did the health food addicts acquire the carob habit. But the most desolate thing about the plantation was that the trees had been planted in rows twenty feet apart east and west and thirty feet apart north and south; years of staring down these rows, or squinting fanwise across them to seek out or fabricate all manner of diagonal rows, have left me with the tic of lining things up, a spot on the windowpane with a plane in the distance, a pencil point with the tip of your nose. It was an imbecile geometer's version of perfection.

The desert did not like us. Sometimes, especially at sunset, it was beautiful but its beauty was not responsive in any way; it was just there; sometimes after supper we would sit on the front porch and awe at it. Yet, neither did the desert *dis*like us. The beasts of the desert were not congenial: jackrabbits, roadrunners, gopher snakes and gophers, horned toads like suede models of dinosaurs, scorpions and centipedes and black widow spiders, tarantulas, gila monsters, stink bugs. They could not be taken as responsive to a man as a man: rattlesnakes did not strike nor coyotes slink away because you were human but because you were a thing that threatened. The pathetic fallacy, which had so enriched poetry's pastures in Europe, was wholly absent here and it transplanted badly. I tried personification on a raggedy, misanthropic sheepherder once—we did not have shepherds but sheepherders—but when I learned he had piles he ceased to be the Spirit of the Desert roaming the hills in self-elected solitude and became a Portugee named Lou. The sky was there, the perfect sky

in which the clouds, when they appeared, were far too huge to be friendly or laughing; the sky was *there,* not here. (As it still is; up in a plane 20,000 feet above the ground, I do not feel myself to be in the sky, for I can't get it to stick in my head that the air around me is pantheistically One with the vast Inane.) And lord of it all was the sun, surely the very source and power of Nature; but the desert sun gave not just abundantly of its heat and light, but superabundantly, indifferent to what we needed or wanted, gave endlessly of itself with harsh force and strange love, witheringly, gave, gave and would not take in return.

* * *

I substituted poetry for Plato's ladder, and got so I could run up it like a monkey up a palm-tree and jump off the top step into a Palgrave posy of perfection.

> Hail to thee, Bright Star, half-angel and half-bird!
> Who, to the last point of vision, and beyond,
> Mounted with full-throated ease! Thou was not born for death;
> When old age shall this generation waste,
> Thou shalt remain upon the sole Arabian tree,
> The goblet of thy beaded-bubble song
> Staining the white radiance of eternity.
>
> Would I were steadfast as thou, Blithe Spirit,
> Who in broad daylight shin'st unseen. Yet hark—
> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; wherefore, sweet Thames, run gently
> That all the woods may answer and the echo ring.
>
> Bright effluence of bright essence increate,
> Art thou a vision or a waking dream?
> Sophocles long ago heard thee on the Aegean,
> Singing of Mount Abora. Do I wake or sleep?

It seemed to me at the time that all that really mattered was the realm where Truth was Beauty, God was the spirit of the Universe, and the quality of Mercy was not strained, and that my family and I alike were clayey beyond redemption. I might in fact have grown toward Manicheism—that desert-born heresy—shoving the Will for Good up among those sky-blue abstract nouns and concentrating the Will for Evil down in the carob plantation. But fortunately the sun, which was the embodiment of the unattainable, I did not much like: it was just a ball of gas doing what it had to, and it made the climate dry and dry air hurt my nose. More fortunately

yet, the clay of my family was yeastened not just with affection, which I dismissed as an analgesic, but also with a whiff of *agape,* about which my poets had not instructed me.

We had a two-holer. Often after supper when the kids were in bed and I was ensconced with a romance by the coal-oil lamp, my parents, wanting a quarter hour's sociability alone and fearing to stroll far in the snake-infested twilight, would take the Sears-Roebuck catalogue and go up to the outhouse together. One evening I crept behind it with a stick in hand; my prank was to poke it through a knot-hole behind the inner seat and to prod whoever was sitting there between the shoulder blades. It was mother; I could hear her talking against Vick's Salve for my brother's croup, and dad grumbling for it. The outhouse at the moment was attached to the back of the aviary, which was housing some guinea hens—restless birds. Under cover of their stirrings I managed to get my stick through the knot-hole without being detected. My parents were Protestants fresh from Indiana, so that their natural and newcomer fear of such *outré* creatures as scorpions had been heightened by Isaiah: prophecies fulfilled. The door to the outhouse was not wide and the latch wouldn't work if you were pressing against the door. As soon as my mother felt something on her back, she let out a yell that startled the stick from my hand. "On my back!" she screamed. "What is it? Scorpions!" Father, seeing in the gloaming that something dangled from the knot-hole, hollered "Rattlesnake!" Mother pressed for the door, shrieking, and father bellowed to her not to push. I was paralyzed by the consequences of my harmless practical joke; my father cursed, as I had almost never heard him do, cursed at his pants for hobbling him and shouted rudely at my mother to quit jamming him in the doorway; I ran. I hid under the guest bed. From there I could hear father calm mother down, get the lantern and shot gun, return presently with an oath about the stick in the hole, and call my name. In half an hour or so they found me. They scolded me roundly and lectured me on cruel teasing and asked me what in the world I'd thought I was up to and told me never to do a tom-fool thing like that again: they gave me a chance to repent. Mother and I both cried a bit, and father sat smoking his cigar, looking out the window and shaking his head. Then mother began to giggle, and nudged father, who barked; and by the time she had got in the middle of telling over again everything that had happened, all three of us were helpless with laughter.

* * *

When I went to college, matriculating up into literary criticism, Coleridge was my man. It was about that time that I first saw a Shakespeare play decently performed and began to realize what all the shouting had been for; but *Macbeth* is by no means about perfection or the ideal, and not much about Nature, and Macbeth himself is both admirable and wicked in a way which nothing but actual life could have prepared me for. Troubled by all that life, imperfect life, in so great a poem, I was immensely grateful for Coleridge's luminous guidance: by his light I saw that the play itself was a part of Nature (*organic* unity) and that, being Shakespeare's, it itself was perfect (the Hell-Porter scene, so low, must have been added by some low tamperer). With this general view of things I remained content for years: instead of having perfection and Nature for subjects (indeed I got fed up with them about this time), I would ask only that the primary, esemplastic Imagination work through the poet to fashion out of intrinsically valueless materials a perfect work of art; a poem must *be* perfection. If there was anything the New Critics agreed on it was this, and I loved them all; and furthermore they confirmed my chronic disposition toward short poems, for most of the well-wrought Urns in literature turn out to be short poems. Yvor Winters put the case as strikingly as it could be put, but on the whole I preferred such critics as Cleanth Brooks, who would sneak in a sizable excerpt from *Paradise Regained* or trace a theme throughout a play and would even give honorable mention to novelists, though usually to such U writers as Flaubert or Joyce who did not permit love of their characters to interfere with the exercise of their craft.

Though it had occurred to me that hankering after Platonic ideals might very likely be a form of escapism, much to be censured, it was not for years that I suspected I was doing something of the sort when studying the perfection of Urn shapes without Platonic contents. Yet, even during my most esemplastic period, there were forces working against my U tendencies. Partly, to be sure, there was the clay-cum-love of which my family was compounded; partly there was my irrepressible fondness for writers such as Dickens and Hardy who were blatantly imperfect; but I also gave credit to the subversive influences of the only urn I'd come across in daily life.

It belonged to Lois's mother. Lois lived up the road a couple of miles, and her father had drunk too much. Lois herself was a chasmal couple of years older than I, and I remember of her best an Arabian Nights belly, "like a heap of wheat" (my secondary imagination was

convinced her wheat was golden under her dress and very likely smelled of nard) and in her navel one "could put an ounce of ointment" (a dalliance which still has power to bemuse my fancy). When Lois's father died, her mother, who had abused him publicly in a shocking way when he was living, had his body cremated and the ashes put in an urn. This urn was of yellowish cream color and encrusted with purple lumps representing grapes; it was thick-necked and heavy-based; it was kept on the mantel in the parlor and flanked by very tall white candles. On the anniversary of his death the candles burned all day, and for the hour before and after the hour of his death Lois and her mother sat in the room, reading the Bible because one should, and "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" because it had been his favorite poem.

As for well-wrought Grecian Urns, I've looked pretty closely at the amphorae and lekythoi in the Metropolitan Museum, but I can't say I've been as impressed as I'd hoped I'd be. The Greeks made them to contain olive oil or wine, but there in their cases they stand choked to their necks with solemn, museum air. I would rather have a bucket full of goat's milk.

Wyatt's poems, for example—I liked them from the first lines I came upon, all the way through the collected poems.

> They flee from me that sometimes did me seek,
> With naked foot stalking in my chamber.

Maybe a New Critic could make a case for this poem's perfection—for all I know one of them may have tried to. But though I have read it a hundred times with never-failing pleasure I have always felt the last couplet (like the couplet concluding nearly any of Shakespeare's sonnets) to be a decided let-down from the rest of the poem, especially rhythmically, and not the sort of let-down that is *really,* if you just get the right point of view on it, a good thing, intentional, justifiable, crafty.

> But since that I so kindely am served,
> I fain would know what she hath deserved.

And one of the things I especially like about the poem is its content: I delight in imagining myself a nobleman into whose chamber women have stalked with naked feet (one in especial with arms long and small), who through his gentleness is forsaken by her in favor of newfangledness, and who perceives and withstands this with elegant

irony. This delight, so far as I can see, is non-esthetic: I would have done it if I'd had the chance, and by *it* I mean the part that does not *be* but *means,* the part that would have had much the same effect if I had read it in prose instead of in verse.

I think "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is the best narrative poem in English since Chaucer, but not all the king's men can convince me that everything in it is justifiable. I share Coleridge's posterior, table-talk opinion that the moralizing at the end is too blessed heavy-handed.

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

It sounds like a Sunday-school song for kindergartners. Pope thought several of Donne's satires needed purifying, and turned them into heroic couplets. Ben Jonson thought Donne should have been hanged for the not keeping of meter and wished Shakespeare had blotted a thousand of his lines. While Coleridge the perfectionist held me with his glittering eye, I used to agree with sentiments like these. But I am like the wedding guest:

> He went like one that hath been stunned,
> And is of sense forlorn:
> A sadder and a wiser man,
> He rose the morrow morn.

Only I'm not sadder for no longer pretending that God's speeches in *Paradise Lost* are much better than the big-talk suitable to the Father Divine who used to operate out of Philadelphia or that the slaughter at the end of *Hamlet* is other than meathouse melodrama.

Of all the non-U poems I know of by contemporary poets, there's none I like better than Winfield Townley Scott's "The U. S. Sailor with the Japanese Skull".

> Bald-bare, bone-bare, and ivory yellow: skull
> Carried by a thus two-headed U. S. sailor
> Who got it from a Japanese soldier killed
> At Guadalcanal in the ever-present war: our
>
> Bluejacket, I mean, aged twenty, in August strolled
> Among the little bodies on the sand and hunted
> Souvenirs: teeth, tags, diaries, boots; but bolder still
> Hacked off this head and under a leopard tree skinned it;

I see no good reason to separate "our" from "Bluejacket" as the poet has done, and "ever-present" is rather less than distinguished.

> Peeled with a lifting knife the jaw and cheeks, bared
> The nose, ripped off the black-haired scalp and gutted
> The dead eyes to these thoughtful hollows: a scarred
> But bloodless job, unless it be said brains bleed.

The last clause seems to mean more than it does.

> Then, his ship underway, dragged this aft in a net
> Many days and nights—the cold bone tumbling
> Beneath the foaming wake, weed-worn and salt-cut
> Rolling safe among fish and washed with Pacific;
>
> Till on a warm and level-keeled day hauled in
> Held to the sun and the sailor, back to a gun-rest,
> Scrubbed the cured skull with lye, perfecting this:
> Not foreign as he saw it first: death's familiar cast.

The "foaming" wake is uninspired. The syntax or punctuation of the first two lines of this fifth stanza is, if not impenetrable, at least needlessly tough.

> Bodiless, fleshless, nameless, it and the sun
> Offend each other in strange fascination
> As though one of the two were mocked; but nothing is in
> This head, or it fills with what another imagines
>
> As: here were love and hate and the will to deal
> Death or to kneel before it, death emperor,
> Recorded orders without reasons, bomb-blast, still
> A child's morning, remembering moonlight on Fujiyama:
>
> All scoured out now by the keeper of this skull
> Made elemental, historic, parentless by our
> Sailor boy who thinks of home, voyages laden, will
> Not say, 'Alas! I did not know him at all.'

I get into a fuzz of logic, in the first three lines of the last stanza, and I do not know why one line ends with "in," another with "our," another with "will," syntactical wrenches without much formal cause. But these are about as important as Einstein's sweatshirts and uncombed hair. There are charges of intensity leaping from stanza to stanza that seem to me splendid, and the last line once stood the hair up on the back of my neck and still can moisten my eyes. In

other words, my experience in reading this poem is not just esthetic: not the least of the reasons I like it is that it has shown me a truth about something that matters. In the image of the U.S. sailor cleaning the skull of the beheaded Japanese, and in the last line of the poem, are contained a horror at the sailor's indifference and a pity for his alienation from his enemy whom he has dehumanized, that have not only moved me but have taught me to see something about the attitude of Americans towards their enemies generally. An expression such as "heightened awareness" does not explain what I take from the poem. It is a message, an old-fashioned message, of the sort that has been added to what I know, that might have been and can be said in other words but never has been, to my knowledge, said as well as here, that derives from the poet's experience of life and adds to mine. No more than telling a story is this something that all poems do, nor is it what is proper to poetry as poetry, this incarnating of an idea; but when a poem does this, I think it churlish to hold that the idea (which is of course *also* one of the ingredients of the poem) has value *only* as an ingredient. Scott, I am convinced, embodied this idea in this poem, not just because he liked it and thought it useful but because he thought it was true. And the experiences about which the poem is concerned—both the sailor's dealing with the skull and the poet's reflections on this—are such as matter apart from the poem: I would have enjoyed reading about the sailor's act in the *Times,* and I would have enjoyed hearing the poet talking about it in conversation. The poem doesn't create the values of this act and this meditation but clarifies and orders these values; to be sure, this process itself magnifies the values and holds them together (not quite inextricably), with its own special power; it is this wonderful binding and shaping power, which of course itself has a value of a high kind, that some critics, in extremities, maintain is the sole true value of any poem. But for my own part, when on certain occasions I have repeated to myself, "Who will not say, 'Alas! I did not know him at all'," I have done it less because it is beautiful inside the poem than because it is true outside as well.

Sometimes I am amused to consider how far I have backslid from estheticism, and I while away my apostasy by such reflections as this: Would Chartres cathedral have been more esthetically pleasing if the architects had only known they were creating an outside Urn instead of thinking they were just building an edifice for the benefit of men and the greater glory of God?

* * *

I have, as befits one of my generation, tried to untranquilize my recollections of childhood in hope of flushing a trauma which would explain my tolerance—indeed, my partiality—toward imperfect poems that contain a message. Traumas I seem to be short on, but a decisive influence I am satisfied that I have found—Eva, our three-titted goat, whom I used to milk.

My brother needed goat's milk for his health, and we were fortunate to get, in Eva, a nanny that not only was a good milker but also had a sweet disposition. She did not stink as goats are said to; when she was chewing alfalfa hay her breath was sweet and moist. As I would tear off a slab of hay from the bale with a pitchfork and loosen it for her, she liked to butt me with her head; she had back-arching horns, but she never tried to use them against any of us. I liked to watch her head jerk at the hay and her quick jaws chew it. She sometimes turned as I was milking her and nibbled at my hair with her lips. I cannot say that her baa was as melodious as a cow's moo, yet it was more expressive—affectionate, anxious, demanding. One of her eyes was pure brown and the other brown flecked with hazel; I found it fascinating that their pupils were rectangles the sides of which were slightly convex arcs. I saw her give birth to her twins, their white hair as soft as down, their bleating and hers enough to bring tears to your eyes, their bones as soft as butter. A cow's tits hang from her udder like four fingers, but a goat's two tits are continuous, conical extensions of her udder. Some sportive gene had misfired in Eva, so that instead of one large right tit she had two, a middle-sized one and a small one. When her bag was swollen with milk, her left tit jutted forward and out as it was supposed to, but the middle-sized one pointed straight down and the small one stuck a bit backward. I always milked her from the right side because I liked it better; the two smaller tits were easier to hold in the hand and definitely gave more milk than the large left one. I would lay my head against her soft-haired belly, in the hollow in front of her hip and below her backbone, sort of nudge her so she would half-baa peaceably once in a while as she chewed, and squirt the rich milk into the foaming pail.

Eva helped form me, split-titted Eva; for she taught me that love, any sort of love, even of poetry, no matter what beautiful-true perfection it gets up to, forgets at its peril the nuzzling, butting, pie-eyed clay in which the foot of its ladder had better be secured.

E. E. CUMMINGS:

Poem

in time of daffodils(who know
the goal of living is to grow)
forgetting why,remember how

in time of lilacs who proclaim
the aim of waking is to dream,
remember so(forgetting seem)

in time of roses(who amaze
our now and here with paradise)
forgetting if,remember yes

in time of all sweet things beyond
whatever mind may comprehend,
remember seek(forgetting find)

and in a mystery to be
(when time from time shall set us free)
forgetting me,remember me

A. R. AMMONS:

Mountain Liar

The mountains said they were
    tired of lying down
and wanted to know what
    I could do about
getting them off the ground

Well close your eyes I said
    and I'll see if I can
by seeing into your nature
    tell where you've been wronged
What do you think you want to do
    They said Oh fly

My hands are old
    and crippled keep no lyre
but if that is your true desire
    and conforms roughly
with your nature I said
    I don't see why
we shouldn't try
    to see something along that line

Hurry they said and snapped shut
    with rocky sounds their eyes
I closed mine and sure enough
    the whole range flew
gliding on interstellar ice

They shrieked with joy and peeked
    as if to see below
but saw me as before there
    foolish without my lyre
We haven't budged they said
    You wood

Ritual for Eating the World

At a bend in the rocks there hung
inexplicably a rope
and musing I said
When I die don't bury me
under no weeping willer tree

It's I thought a hangman's loop
provided by my warmer ghoul to
raise me out of care

or god's own private fishing hook
for glaring people
who sit wasted in the sun
on rocks

But put me up in a high dry place
unavailable to a coyote's face

It's what I said old mountain
climbers left
dangling

The wind rides blade on mesa tops

Oh when I die don't bury me
under no weeping willer tree

and there being besides old bush
and distance nothing but a rope
I engaged myself with it but

it broke
and all through the heaving night
making day I faced

piecemeal the sordid
reacceptance of my world

Hymn V

So when the year had come full round
I rose
and went out to the naked mountain
to see
the single peachflower on the sprout

blooming through a side of ribs
  possibly a colt's
and I endured each petal separately
and moved in orisons with the sepals

I lay
  said the sprouting stump
in the path of Liberty

Tyranny though I said is very terrible
and sat down leeward of the blossom
  to be blessed
and was startled by
a lost circling bee

The large sun setting red I went
down to the stream
  and wading in
let your cold water run over my feet

Hymn VI

I hold you responsible for
every womb's neck
  clogged with
killing growth

and for ducks on the bay
barking like hounds
all night
their wintering dreams

responsible for every action of
the brain that gives
me mind
and for all light

for the fish-roe's
birth spawning forage to
night eels
nosing the tidal banks

I keep you existent at least as
a ghost crab
moon-extinguished his crisp
movement silenced on broken shells

answering at least as
the squiggling copepod
for the birthing and aging of
life's all-clustered grief

You have enriched us with
fear and contrariety
providing the searcher
confusion for his search

teaching by your snickering
wisdom an autonomy
for man
Bear it all

and keep me from my enemies'
wafered concision and zeal
I give you back to yourself
whole and undivided

Hymn X

In the hour of extreme
  importance
when clots thicken
in outlying limbs and
    warmth retreats
to mourn
the thinning garrison of pulse

keep my tongue loose
to sing possible
  changes that might redeem

might in iron phrases
  clang the skies

bells and my jangling eyes
ringing you in
    to claim me

shriven celebrant
your love's new-reasoned singer

    home

dead on arrival

RALPH ROBIN:

Scott Burgess and His Friends

Scott Burgess saw his parents when he was six, eleven, and sixteen. He was raised in a boarding school for the children of missionaries, and the heathen generously parted with his parents that often. They were both ordained, if that is the correct term; and they died of natural causes before he was twenty-one. When Scott finished college (a person did so then) he went to work as a cataloguer at the Library of Congress.

It was necessary to live somewhere that was not a boarding school, a college dormitory, or Uncle Doctor's. A senior at the Library introduced him to an old virgin who wanted a young man in the house to protect her from thieves and fires: one couldn't be too careful thenadays. The old lady was delighted with his respectable antecedents; she took his money regularly only to preserve his self-respect. She gave him the smallest, coldest, and worst-furnished room in the house and there he lived on. He mowed the lawn and stoked the furnace and did other chores. He didn't think this strange; he had done these things at boarding school and at college and was perhaps uneasy that he did not have to at the Library of Congress.

Nor did he find it strange that the house on First Street, Southeast, was hierarchic. Miss Lucy Pitton, the owner, ranked first; Miss Mary Klank, the companion, ranked second; and young Scott Burgess, "the boy who stays with us," was third and last. Only the head of the house preserved the house's maidenhead, though she thought all was well. Mary coupled every Saturday night with a contractor concealed as her poor old friends in Anacostia. Scott preserved his purity—except for nocturnal emissions (the heavy pajamas he wore because of the cold pretty well protected the sheets, and the Chinese laundry had an air of anonymity that left him unashamed)—only until he was twenty-seven.

Scott did not attend the war. He usually had a slight cold because of the sharp difference in temperature between his room and the Library—or because he believed that this would cause a cold on the double authority of the boarding school doctor and Uncle Doctor. The eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist (that Elizabeth, Betty, Betsy,

and Bess of medicine) who examined him at the selection center had a passion for chronic sinusitis and found his chronic cold to be such and sent him back to his cold room and hot Library. A few days later a young woman struck up an acquaintance with him at a streetcar stop and took him home to her apartment with her.

They were a naive pair all right, as their acquaintance improved. He pretended to be an experienced lover and she believed him though she didn't pretend to be inexperienced. She was disappointed at his inexpertness. "He can't even find the hole," she thought, shocked but excited by her language. "He scarcely knows what to do when he is in it." But if inexpert he was not inapt. Essentially it was easier than keeping up a good fire in an old furnace with too little coal or mastering the numbering system at the Library of Congress. He soon achieved a high degree of proficiency. They soon got to like each other and finally fell in love. Her name was Eloise Darnell; she was the wife of a professor at George Washington University, but they had separated. Fifteen years passed as easily as in *The Winter's Tale* (PR 2839).

"It's white," Lucy Pitton said. She was ninety-one.

"It's good. Eat it," Mary Klank said. She was sixty-two. "See, I'm eating mine. Scott is eating his. Aren't you, Scott?"

"Yes, Miss Klank," Scott said. He lifted a spoonful of dense Cream of Wheat to his mouth. He was forty-two.

"I want Wheatena," Lucy Pitton said.

"The doctor says Wheatena is too coarse for you."

"I don't care what the doctor says. I want Wheatena. Scott, your uncle is a doctor, isn't he?"

"Yes, Miss Pitton."

"Write to him and ask him if I can't eat Wheatena. Mary, take this away and bring me Wheatena."

"Oh, all right."

"Take yours away and Scott's too. Bring us all Wheatena. I think it's nice for a whole family to eat the same thing for breakfast. It's what they call togetherness nowadays and that's something nice about these terrible times anyway. You know, I regard you both as my family. Have you given Miss Klank your check this week, Scott?"

"Yes, Miss Pitton."

"You know we only take your money to preserve your self-respect, don't you, Scott?"

"Yes, Miss Pitton."

She turned up the volume of her hearing aid. "Do I hear you getting another pot, Mary?"

"Well?"

"Don't make work for yourself. Throw away that Cream of Wheat and use the same pot."

"All right."

"Mary?"

"Yes?"

"Be sure you scour out all that Cream of Wheat before you cook the Wheatena. I won't eat if I find one speck."

Scott reconciled himself to losing an hour's leave. Now that he was head of a subsection he always charged himself an hour's annual leave when he was more than a few minutes late; he thought it set a good example. When Mary brought the Wheatena, Scott discovered steel wool in it. He didn't want to offend Miss Klank; but he didn't want to murder Miss Pitton, so he had to raise an alarm. The hullabaloo was still going on when he left. He wondered if the excitement would not be as bad for Miss Pitton's heart as the steel wool would have been for her digestion; certainly it would be worse than plain Wheatena.

Her desire to eat a food considered bad for her was a new development, and Scott somewhat admired her for it. During the twenty years he had lived in her house, she had worried so much about her digestion that he had come to consider her diagrammatically, as a long alimentary canal activated by a heart and a tangle of nerve fibers. Scott believed that she loved him and loved Miss Klank also; that Miss Klank loved Miss Pitton and loved him.

"Yoo hoo, Scott. Yoo hoo." A woman moved her arm (terminating in a flat, fat hand) at the elbow like a windshield wiper. Scott had to stand there, late as he was, because this was a friend of his, Mrs. Havelly. "The admiral would like you to stop in for a highball after work. Five-thirtyish, shall we say?"

"Of course, Mrs. Havelly. Thank you, Mrs. Havelly. How are you? And is the admiral well? I shall look forward to seeing him."

Since his retirement Admiral Havelly had helped organize five reactionary political parties. They had all sunk; but the admiral never went down. He decided he had done enough for the Republic, except for one last public-spirited task: one which he expected would be compensated for by money as well as by universal appreciation. He hired a ghost to write his memoirs. But he was only a captain in

reality, retired as a rear admiral, and his ghost was an old hack writing badly enough, in a style a generation behind the times. The publishers had plenty of fake books scheduled without Admiral Havelly's. A vanity press brought it out, very attractively for the money, and Admiral and Mrs. Havelly's problems in present-giving were solved for all time. Admiral Havelly was now launching a scheme to market frozen doughnuts in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

Scott put his hat back on and ran up the street, aware that the policemen beside the Old House Office Building were watching him with dull interest, aware that now he was not concerned what time he got to the Library, although he was running. He was concerned about his $12,837. He had saved it by no effort, simply by not learning to want things; but he valued it highly and often thought what to do with it. Sometimes he thought he would take leave without pay for a year and travel around the world; sometimes he thought he would buy a perfect house to live in; and sometimes he thought, not actually needing the money himself, he would give it to worthy charities. He often put himself to sleep dividing his savings among the National Heart Fund, the Young Men's Christian Association, Friendship House, and the American Civil Liberties Union. (He did not share his friend the admiral's political views.)

He was plunging up First Street toward Union Station, where he often sat in the winter when he was not in his room or at the Library. There was a clenching in his chest, cold as a package of frozen doughnuts; his face would have been hot except that it was cooled by the sharp air he moved through. The hints of his friends were converging to a conclusion: tonight they would extract from him a sacred pledge of all his money. He did not suspect Admiral Havelly of intent to embezzle his money; but he knew beyond any doubt whatever that the admiral would lose it all.

The great Library was lost behind him like a disapproving but slow adult; he was not going there today. He called up from the station. Jane in his subsection answered and he told her of important personal business.

"Your friend, Mrs. Darnell, called already. She wants you to call her."

"Yes. Yes, thank you."

"You're just like the husbands here even if you are an old bachelor. That's just like my husband too; he says, 'Yes, yes, thank you,' and

then doesn't call me at all. I know."

"You are very hard on me, Jane. You make me see myself as in a mirror. But you are right. Yes, right. On the bibliography for Dr. Franciosi, go right ahead."

"I'll get stuck, Scott."

"Well, do the best you can."

Then he did call Eloise, who was working now for the Teamsters' Union.

"Scott? A very good morning to you. Do you know what day this is?"

"It's not your birthday."

"Of course not. You know when my birthday is. You bought me that lovely figurine from your friend the admiral."

"No, that was from my friend the Chinese general who has a store on I Street."

"That's who I meant. I don't have a good place for it, but I do love it; I take it out of my closet and look at it ever so often. But, Scott, what day is this?"

"You ask me a very difficult question, Eloise. I'm at a loss what to say. Tuesday?"

"I'm not going to call the Library of Congress for any more information, if you can't do better than that. Today is Halfway Day. To end the mystification, it's just exactly three months—only three months—before my decree becomes final. At last."

"Congratulations. Yes, indeed. Congratulations."

"Good-bye, Scott. I have to get ready for the coffee break, as the old joke is here—but I really have a lot of work to do."

Scott wandered to a stand-up snack bar, where orange crush whirled in a glass bowl. He wanted hot chocolate. He saw on a sign, with his usual astonishment at the change, that hot chocolate was fifteen cents; it seemed abnormal to him that hot chocolate had ever risen above ten cents and did not now include two cookies. The girl there, a cheerful fat thing she looked, made him hot chocolate in an unusual manner: she put vanilla ice cream in it.

He stirred with a wooden spoon in the paper cup, and the blob of ice cream collapsed into the drink. "Oh, my God," he said. "What will I do?" He didn't really want the hot chocolate at all, but he tasted it to see if it was cool enough and drank it in several gulps. He hurried into the cold part of the station, on the way to the trains, where two 1958 automobiles turned on carpets. Everywhere on

Capitol Hill the home owners or their contractors were ripping and pounding to make their garages fit these cars.

He saw there was a Pennsylvania train leaving for New York in fifteen minutes. He ran back to the ticket window, and to the trains again; and he ran down the platform to the coaches. He should have wired Uncle Doctor. Uncle Doctor had always said Scott was always welcome but should always wire: by Postal Telegraph, which Uncle Doctor preferred. When the train started to move, Scott felt suddenly sick. He wanted to get off and go back to the Library to die, but it was too late. He wasn't sure what was the matter with him, but he thought it must be his heart. He had a strange feeling in his chest, and pains rippled along his arms. Miss Pitton often spoke of pains radiating into the arms. This was one of the slower trains, and he spent five hours in expectation of death.

He thought about a quotation he was trying to place (a congressman was trying to place it and all over the Library people were looking for it) and he suddenly remembered the source while his mind spun with death; it was from Herodotus. The first thing he did in Pennsylvania Station was to call up the New York Public Library and verify it; then he wired his chief. He felt that a deficit had been made good, though of necessity by Western Union.

His uncle—really the husband of his mother's older sister—had his office on the ground floor of a remodeled house on West Tenth Street. He lived two flights up, in a small apartment; Scott's aunt was dead, but she had lasted among Christians twenty years longer than her sister. When she died in 1952, he sold his old practice and new turquoise stucco mansion on Staten Island and moved with some of his oldest furniture to Manhattan. It never occurred to Scott to take a taxi anywhere, not even in Washington where they are so cheap; and finding the subway, though he had often found it before, was beyond him today. He managed to get into the air on Seventh Avenue, and walked south.

He found the building, but the door of the office was locked. Under the lettered office hours there was a typewritten card held by pieces of curling Scotch tape. It read: OTHER TIMES TRY RESIDENCE ON THIRD FLOOR IN CASE OF EMERGENCY ONLY.

Scott raced up the stairs, two flights, and pounded on his uncle's door.

"Who is it? Is it an emergency?" his uncle called through this closed door.

"It's I. Scott."

"Well." The door opened. "I'm certainly surprised to see you, Scott. You didn't telegraph. I always told you you were always welcome so long as you telegraphed, preferably by Postal Telegraph, though of course they're out of business now and it would be necessary to use Western Union. I always thought Postal Telegraph much more efficient and obliging."

"I think I'm dying, Uncle Doctor."

"What of? Lung cancer? I warned my patients to give up smoking years ago, but hardly anyone listened to me. They have to read it in the newspapers."

"I don't smoke. I think I'm dying of heart disease."

"You look flushed. How did you get here from the station?"

"I walked. I didn't feel like—"

"You walked. And I heard you run up the steps. You can't be dying very fast. Unbutton your shirt."

The doctor bent and pressed his ear to Scott's breast. Scott thought he could hear the bumps of his heart going into that medical and related brain. He felt the warm ear and cheek on his skin. He could smell his uncle's hair, the old hairy smell, a little sourer now, perhaps, but still comforting.

The doctor took his head away. He said of course—what other phrase would he have used?—"You'll do."

"What's the matter with me, Uncle Doctor?"

"I want to speak to you very seriously. Very seriously and frankly. Sit down, if you please." The doctor seated himself on an old leather couch with wooden arms. Scott looked around, and sat down on a straight chair. He had buttoned his shirt and tied his tie and straightened his jacket. Unknowingly he had picked up his overcoat and was holding it over his arm.

"A young man like you, unmarried and living in a room by himself, is apt sometimes to fall into bad habits—in fact, to be frank, one particular bad habit. To be frank with you, he is liable to the habit of masturbation."

"But I don't masturbate, Uncle Doctor. I never did."

"Well, see that you don't. That's all, Scott."

There was silence. "Look," Uncle Doctor said portentously, "it is necessary that I make a purchase uptown. I'll give you a lift to the station."

"I don't want to be a trouble" and "No trouble at all" were said.

"Before we go," said Uncle Doctor. "I'm charging you only seven and a half dollars instead of my usual ten dollars for an ordinary examination or treatment at my residence outside of office hours. But I feel that a young man like you should pay something for what he gets or the cost to him will be greater in self-respect than any monetary consideration might be."

On the train to Washington, Scott suffered bitter regret that he had forgotten to ask Uncle Doctor whether Wheatena was too coarse for the alimentary canal on First Street; he wanted to get out at every stop and take a train back to New York. It was dark outside the train windows and dark in Washington; he went through the hall past the closed door of the parlor up the stairs to his room, with the sideways walk of roomers in houses, which he thought the way to walk. His room was narrow and had a narrow window and a narrow bed and a paper wardrobe about body size and a broken chair and a broken table. There were no books of his own; books were a mess to keep clean, said Miss Klank; but there were always two or three books from the Library hidden in the wardrobe.

There was no reading lamp for table or bed. But it was possible to read, sitting up and wrapped in blankets, in the middle of the bed under the hanging bulb. Scott read mainly the books out of old curricula. Tonight it was colder than usual; the day that had begun with Miss Pitton's defying her digestion had ended with Scott's letting the furnace go out. He dressed again and walked sideways to the cellar. But when he got there he realized that to shake the ashes would wake the ladies and to start a fire so late at night would waste coal. He went back to his room and set his alarm clock an hour early.

The next morning he remembered what he had forgotten besides the furnace. He remembered his appointment for a highball with the admiral. It was necessary to apologize: he did so by telephone from his office. After accepting his apology, Mrs. Havelly renewed the invitation for that very night. His money was as good as gone, it seemed to him.

He worked most of the morning on the bibliography, in a haze; he could work with pencil and paper, but he could not coherently answer any of Jane's questions. Dr. Franciosi wandered in once from his room among the privileged researchers, but fortunately he came only to tell a long story about his wife's cat ("the little devil has got so it recognizes my existence, and yesterday evening when

I parked the car . . ."). All Scott had to do was nod in understanding and shake his head in wonderment. But Scott was tortured by a hot desire to interrupt Dr. Franciosi, an expert on debentures, to tell him about Admiral Havelly and ask his advice; to tell him of his heart attack on the train, the coldness of Uncle Doctor, his love affair with Eloise Darnell, and the stiff-stained flannelet pajamas he had taken to the Chinese laundry for so many years. Why, Scott Burgess asked himself, did he think it so fortunate that Dr. Franciosi did not suspect his agitation? Didn't his agitation have the right for once to cry out in screaming words?

How lonesome he was for Eloise; but when Eloise called around ten o'clock he talked to her as if she were a member of the public. He was reminded of something another woman had said to him, looking at him with pity (why had he not separated that woman's thighs?): "Scott, why don't you buy a house?"

Scott went out for lunch but not to lunch. He walked southeast on Pennsylvania Avenue to a real estate agency, C. T. Richard and Sons, and said to a girl behind the counter: "I want to buy a house."

It seemed to him that she said in a low, hateful voice, "What would a person like you do with a house?" but there was no reason for her to say such a thing, and people did not say things without reason. Whatever she had said in a low voice, she wriggled away and came back with a man. "Here's Mr. Richard. He'll take care of you."

"Buddy Richard," said Mr. Richard, evidently a son. Scott Burgess almost said ridiculously, "Scotty Burgess," but he said: "I want to buy a house. I am Scott Burgess, and I am employed in the Library of Congress." Each clumsily tried to let the other through the door—Buddy Richard said his topcoat was in his car—and Scott felt that the girl was watching them hatefully.

Buddy Richard turned on the radio in his 1958 automobile, but they didn't go anywhere. "I used to use the Law Library at your place when I was studying law. I'm really a lawyer, not a real estate salesman, but my father thinks this is good experience. He's C. T. Richard. I like something like this all right; what gets me is when he sits me down in a house—Open—you know—some long set time on a Sunday. Nothing to do except listen to a portable radio, if people don't come. What kind of house do you want? Some of them have been given the Georgetown treatment, you know, and that comes kind of high."

"I think I want one that hasn't been given the Georgetown treatment. I want to renovate it myself. I want to make it the perfect house to live in."

"I have a perfect house for renovation on Gwinnett Street."

"Gwinnett Street! I've always wanted to live on Gwinnett Street. But won't it be too expensive?"

"Well, this is going kind of reasonable. They're asking seventeen-five."

"Pardon me?"

"The asking price is $17,500; but I think she'll come down some. Now you know I get my commission from the seller, but my function in the real estate business is to bring buyer and seller together."

"Will you please turn off that radio? I'll give you $12,837."

"You haven't even seen it."

"I'll see it when it's mine. I'll give you the money right now. It's in the building and loan association across the street. Oh yes, and it has to include settlement charges, if that is the correct term. You're a lawyer. You figure it out, to make it come out even."

"Well, I'll certainly talk to her about it. . . ."

"Let me give you the money now. Then you can give it back to me if she won't take it."

"Yes, I can do that. But we'll ask them to make it a check, if you don't mind."

That evening the starlings went home as usual; they could not be counted. Scott watched them for a few moments (the traffic went the other way) and he ran down First Street—in quiet back yards one could hear their wings. The maid sent Scott to the rec room in the English basement, but that was no insult; for it was the admiral's favorite room and had the largest television screen. (And the admiral courteously turned off the television set, knowing Scott's prejudice.) There was also a little blond mahogany bar, the gift of a contractor when the admiral had headed up an inspection office: the admiral had done nothing dishonest to earn the bar; he had only carried on the duties of his assignment to the best of his ability. He mixed a drink for Scott as if it were a difficult thing to do but he, for one, could do it well.

"And here is a dish of the doughnuts." He did not need to tell Scott, who had eaten almost nothing for two days and was having much trouble keeping his eyes off the doughnuts he did not want to talk about but did want to eat. "Have one. Not the usual accom-

paniment to a highball, I admit, but these aren't your honeydip, sugar, raised, coconut, chocolate, marshmallow, God knows what, but honest-to-Christ old-fashioned solid, but not too solid, doughnuts. They're even put out by a special machine that makes 'em look hand-shaped. They're made of the finest ingredients with no artificial coloring or flavoring, and they are enriched with vitamin B. They're partially precooked by a special electronic process that insures all the old-fashioned goodness with none of the old-fashioned greasiness, and that was a fault of grandma's doughnuts, you'll have to admit, all sentimentality aside. Then they're quick-frozen ten degrees below the usual food-freezing temperatures in a special aluminum package ready to pop into the oven without thawing, after removing the easily removable top. Well, I see you don't need much convincing." Scott was eating his third.

"Sometimes I think," said the admiral, "oh, it's just a fanciful thought, that when grandma stopped making homemade doughnuts, that was when the moral decay we see all around us set in. All these sweet-coated doughnuts, with no authority to them, are symptoms of an underlying disease. Well, frozen doughnuts is one way of restoring an old verity, humble as it is and needs to be, in a new cultural framework. Oh, I know you think I'm a reactionary, Scott, and I accept the term: but I think of a reactionary not as one who wants to turn the clock back but as one who reacts against moral decay. That's enough philosophy for any man's afternoon—I'm not inviting you to join in a crusade; I'm inviting you to come in on a business proposition that will give you an unusual return on your investment. The amount that will put us over the top is just $12,750, and if you will come in for that much—well, last one in is no cross-eyed varmint or anything like that. Last one in is the one that puts us across and will get special consideration. We'll put that in writing. What do you say? All set?"

"You paint a very attractive picture, Admiral Havelly. I would be pleased and honored to associate my capital with yours. But it is impossible; I have no money."

"Have no money! What did you do with the $12,837?"

"I bought a house."

"Where?"

"On Gwinnett Street."

"What number?"

"I don't know."

The admiral seemed surprised to find his fingers putting the cork in the bottle of bourbon. "Shall I fix you another drink?" He did not quite remove the cork again.

"No, thank you. I must go. I promised to do some work for a friend."

"Take the last doughnut." And Scott did; he wrapped it in a cocktail napkin that said "Bottoms Up" illustrated by a lady whose bottom was up.

The friend was Eloise and the work was finding some information in the stacks: he ate the doughnut while he took notes, breaking a rule of the Library. Off he went to Eloise's apartment. It was colder than ever, and he folded his black overcoat around his chin. He had walked only four blocks when he decided to buy Eloise some flowers. He turned around and hurried back. "Usual professional discount," the florist said, writing quickly on a scrap of paper.

He did not refuse the discount; this had happened before. With graying brushed hair, deep eyes, heavy-boned but lightly-fleshed chin thrusting in a manly though unaggressive fashion from the turned-up overcoat, he did look like a priest or like an actor playing the part of a priest. He often thought of himself as a monk, in his room in Miss Pitton's house.

The same man, Scott Burgess, thought Eloise's apartment too bare. Her well-waxed floor and new-painted walls, her few and open furnishings, seemed wrong to him: he wished she would hang the paper tapestries he had bought for her. If a little cracked, a little faded, that only added to their venerable symbolism, his friend, the Chinese general, who kept store on I Street, Northwest, had assured him; and had sold them to him at a reasonable price. His friend, the Chinese general, would have given them to him, except that there was a Chan Buddhist dictum against it, one word of which might be translated "respect of selfhood."

Eloise now valued a streak of white in her hair; it made her different, but not fantastically so. It had started to lighten when she was fourteen. "I talk to you with foolish jokes," she said. "Halfway Day. Getting ready for the coffee break. Oh, my God. I don't even tell you what my feelings really are for you and have been. You're dear and wonderful, if you only realized it. There is no one like you in the whole lonely world." This language means more than the other, she thought; he'll marry me when my decree becomes final. What is going on now? If he has given his money away to charity,

I don't mind—we make enough to live comfortably. Maybe he's running away to Europe—no, he wouldn't do that. Oh, my God: maybe he has turned Catholic and is joining the Trappist monks and will sell whole wheat bread from Virginia, door to door.

Scott sat in his gray suit, which was worn and dry-cleaned thin; his hands were folded and he looked at the floor. "I am not dear," he said with a silly smile. "People say my habits are cheap. I am not wonderful. I am full of horrors. May I take off my trousers?"

"Please do."

He went home at one o'clock and walked sideways to his room. The next morning, just before breakfast, he heard Miss Pitton croak and crack on the telephone. "Yes, Scott Burgess lives here. He is the boy who stays with us. No, I will not call him to the telephone. He doesn't have telephone privileges."

Scott guessed it was Buddy Richard calling, though he hadn't told him where he lived. He succeeded in escaping to the Library early; and his phone was ringing there. "I got your house for you," Buddy Richard said. ("Fine," Scott said.) ". . . on condition you assume about twelve hundred dollars still owing on a first trust."

"That's over and above the $12,837?"

"Yes, but it's still a good price. Too good—I feel almost unethical in my relation to the seller."

Jane had just come in and was settling at her desk. Scott looked sternly at his telephone: his sternness was not toward Jane, who was on time, but for her admiration. "Under the circumstances, Mr. Richard, I accept the counteroffer on condition there will not be another penny of charges. When will the closing take place?"

"Does Eloise know you've bought a house?" Jane cried.

"Allow me to finish my conversation, Jane."

It was Friday morning at ten o'clock, no later than that, when Scott walked into his house alone, protected by two hours' annual leave. The excitement of the random-length pine flooring, so desirable, moved his bowels; and he looked for the bathroom. The first thing he noticed there—there was no toilet seat. He shrugged; he crouched in the air and, content, let his wastes drop. He had a friend at the Library whose brother was a rug dealer. He would talk to them about slightly used wall-to-wall carpeting.

GERALD FITZGERALD:

My Father Survived Many New England Falls

Father, come down from your ladder.
    Stop, stop, the house is white
    enough. But is it light
    enough to find the way?
Across the pheasant field, pea rows,
cabbage pyramids, my scare-crows
go. Bats go. Frost goes. And he goes
too, my blackberry boy,
my bridled pony toy.
Father, come down, come down.
And if you ask me why
I am hurt and I must die.

Not now. Not now. The house needs healing
    (have a decent respect for your mother's feeling)
    Father must talk to his friends
    and white-wash the day. It ends
else, enflamed with angry red.
What did you say? I said—
O never mind. The field's a bed.
Toss me, toss me, crumpled horn,
sad Bo-peep, blue-boy forlorn.
But not for long. Father, I'll go alone
and if I come this way no more
my thigh was threaded by Adonis' boar.

I rode. I rode. The house fell down
    behind me. The horse gave way,
    my knees—still raised—began to play
    at swimming. NO MORE LIGHT.
Across the cropped down fields, seeded
with glacial stone, I fell, and needed
light no more. (Who did I did he did)
I had a father too and I had toys,

I ate molasses like all good boys.
Father, come down from your sky. My brain
set in the pagan sea of my red veins:
the hands loose, the eye cold, and slack the reins.

PAUL CORDELL:

The Three Children

I

The elder, mahogany girl lies drowning
Under the awning in a polished chair,
Drinking her lover in tonic cups,
Awaiting his Sunday appointed hour.

Sister in the cedar chest lies dying,
Vague her memory, a virginal complaining,
Darkness etching on her pretty mouth
A mask whose likeness her eyes are learning.

Their brother, not a hopeless case, is wooing
With songs of pure linen the closet ghost
Who answers him with a human cunning
False as the sunlight, soft as the dust.

II

These inheritors of the house have gone
Each to his haunting, quaint and alone,
Who never bottle or book put down
Until they'd reduced all knowledge to one:
Not even a finger now of mouse to score
The white perfection of that heavenly floor.
Where they are dancing, so we may be
Who love as sweetly and as surely die.

HAROLD FLEMING:

Earth Makes the Spirit Small

Earth makes the spirit small;
    Roots hide,
And rings of age surround
The furious pith inside
Fattening limbs for fall;
Leaves drift aimlessly down;
    They dry;
The first hard rain rots all.

Winter brings no release.
    Fruit clings;
Birds wheel and seek ground;
Flies stick to the ceiling;
Wives slide fingers in grease;
Bees, they just buzz around,
    But sting;
Nothing gives constant peace.

Man might when he is dead.
    Christ speaks:
Seas, say I am now all land;
Earth, accept me as all sleet;
Sky, I'm water up to my head;
In any wrong wind that's on hand,
    My cheeks
Sink, and my limp limbs spread.

Man has no leaves to fall,
    But can
Come down on either hand,
With or without plan;
Short or very tall,
He'll fatten this good land
    Again
And feed small things that crawl.

CHESTER E. EISINGER:

Saul Bellow: Love and Identity

The world of Saul Bellow, the world of his fiction and the world he himself has lived in, encompasses the American experience from the Depression of the thirties to the automation and conformity of the fifties, including, of course, the war years. Every major social phenomenon of these decades has in common the drift toward human effacement and individual anonymity. The growth of big government and big labor, the development of a massive military establishment, the technological depersonalization of industry, the perfection of the mold for William Whyte's organization man, the flowering on Madison Avenue of techniques for the direction and limitation of choice—these and many other phenomena equally crippling to the human personality give substance to the claim of C. Wright Mills that vast numbers in America have suffered an expropriation of the self and are on all sides the victims of manipulation.

Within the period of Bellow's consciousness the intellectual perspectives of Americans have changed as radically as the social. The liberal-left wing culture of the thirties has come under attack and its easy optimism about history and human nature has been grimly rejected. Its principal critics have been the champions of the New Conservatism and of the religious revival. These two movements, while not pervasive, have been the only coherent, organized alternatives, in the post-war years, with which to replace the liberal culture.

I have made this hasty little sketch of Bellow's world because it has been the traditional function of the novelist since the eighteenth century to give a sense of his own time. Emerging with the rise of the middle class, the novel has always dealt with what has greatly concerned that class: money and property, manners and morals—in short, with the "culture's hum and buzz of implication," as Lionel Trilling suggestively puts it. Bellow has met these obligations of his craft. But I do not mean to suggest that Bellow is a social novelist. It is true that in everything he has written he has faced the problem of the relation of man to his society. He knows the faceless, corporate world around him and has been ravaged by it. His characters know it too, as they struggle in the iron-bound landscape of urban America

under the excoriating pressure of money. Like any artist he has reacted to what is actual in his own time. Yet for him it has been the plight of man, not society, that has demanded attention as the novelist's true subject; it has been the imagination and not the analytical powers that he has relied upon as the ordering and shaping instrument of his art. In *The Lion and the Honeycomb* R. P. Blackmur, discussing the relation of literature to politics, remarks that, "The true business of literature . . . is to remind the powers that be, simple and corrupt as they are, of the turbulence they have to control. There is a disorder vital to the individual which is fatal to society." Bellow in the role of writer would make and preserve the opportunity for the expression of this individual disorder.

To do so, he must set himself against the society around him. He has no difficulty in taking up this stance: it has been forced upon him. In his essay, "Distractions of a Fiction Writer," [1] Bellow says the society does not honor the imagination. He knows that the writer feels society does not need him, that he is held in contempt. He says that in modern times the writer has "gone counter to the general direction" of society. Bellow's friend, the late Isaac Rosenfeld, writing on the relation of the writer to his society,[2] has said, I believe, what Bellow himself would accept. It is essential for the writer, Rosenfeld asserts, to stand aside from society and to refuse to be assimilated to the institutions and attitudes of the society. The writer must reject the role that society gives him, since society always showers upon him a contempt and suspicion and hostility and rejection that are beyond mere alienation. The writer must rise above all this to achieve his real fulfillment, which is to record life from his living perspective. Bellow, I feel, has gained this perspective. The distance he maintains from society has enabled him, paradoxically, to grasp the truth and meaning in it. The sources of his power are inherent in his position. Being outside the society, he can readily see what it is doing to man. And he can freely speak out, for he is committed to no one but himself.

As the writer is driven, willingly and in his own interest, out of the society, so men generally are alienated from it. What has happened to man in the desperate world that Bellow has known has not lessened the writer's interest in him. On the contrary, it has made all the more intense Bellow's assertion of the indomitable and insatiable attraction of man for his kind or the interest of man in himself. At the close of "Distractions of a Fiction Writer," where he is making these points,

Bellow quotes Simone Weil: " 'To believe in the existence of human beings as such is love'." Here, I think, is the clue to Bellow. With Jean-Paul Sartre, Bellow could well say, "I choose man," for the writing of a novel in which the writer cares about his people, Bellow seems to imply, is in itself an act of love. The kind of power that the writer wields, the power of imagination, enables the writer to give meaning to the feebleness and servitude of man's life. This power must reveal to man his greatness and must enable him to complete his own life. In this way Bellow reclaims the individual through love; he brings him again a sense of his own identity. The novelist, he has said, is self-appointed and self-elected. It is to these great tasks that he is elected.

In discovering his purpose and his mission, Bellow is not indebted to either the New Conservatism or the revival of religion. As these movements outline and propagate the hard view of reality with its omnipresent evil and its modernized innate depravity, they have failed to attract Bellow's allegiance. In what I believe to be a comment on the contemporary scene in *The Adventures of Augie March,* Bellow recognizes that Christianity is demanding, in some quarters at least, a harsh reappraisal of man, principally in terms of his culpability. Emphasis on man's potentiality for evil is a part of the reaction against liberalism that gave impetus to both the New Conservatism and the religious revival. When Augie seems to be unaware of the fashionable tendency to place first in his self-estimate his own propensity for evil, he is chided by his friend Padilla, the Mexican mathematician: "The big investigation today is into how *bad* a guy can be, not how good he can be. You don't keep up with the times. You're going against history." Bellow is like Augie. He is fully aware of man's fallibility, but it has not prevented him from declaring for love. If he has found support for his declaration in any tradition, it is a tradition in keeping with his alienation. It is, of course, a Jewish tradition.

Leslie Fiedler apparently thinks that the Jew is no longer an alien in America.[3] On the contrary, in what I can only regard as a self-deluding fantasy, he has claimed that the Jew is now "in the process of being mythicized into the representative American," that he is living the essential American experience, which is urban, lonely, European-oriented, and disenchanted with communism. And that Bellow has emerged as the writer who can transform this experience into myth. I cannot agree with this view of Bellow's impact on the national culture, but I do think it has the virtue of calling attention

to the undeniably Jewish quality of Bellow's work. I want to suggest that the basic attitudes in Bellow—the overwhelming need for love and the joy in life—bear a remarkable similarity to the principles of Hasidism, a Jewish sect that arose in the eighteenth century. As one aware of his Jewish heritage and as a translator of Yiddish stories, Bellow certainly knows about Hasidism. But he offers in his work no evidence of either the theism or the mysticism characteristic of the sect; yet, consciously or not, he is a secular hasid.

In our time, Martin Buber has been the chief spokesman for neo-Hasidism. He has said that "The core of hasidic teachings is the concept of a life of fervor, of exalted joy," and that the movement has "kindled both its simple and intellectual followers to joy in the world as it is, in life as it is in every hour of life in this world, as that hour is." He has emphasized the primitive vitality of the movement, which binds one man to another in a relation of love and responsibility. The hasid knows that men must endure intolerable suffering, but he believes nevertheless that "the heartbeat of life is holy joy." In the hasidic life, sin is possible, but man may be purified of sin and every man may be redeemed. The appetites, far from being despised, are encouraged. Hasidism, Joseph Lookstein writes, glorifies "life" as against the book; knowledge and the intellect are less important than faith. In the struggle between reason and the instincts, if we equate the latter with "life," Bellow is never satisfied with the simplistic view that the rational man shall achieve his goal (as *Dangling Man* makes clear) or that reason is a very decisive force in man's acts. As Augie March says when he sleeps with Stella before he has disengaged himself from Thea, "After much making with sense, it's senselessness that you submit to." Here is an Hebraism Matthew Arnold would not have recognized. Having cast out the stultifying preoccupation with sin, it is at ease in Zion.

It remains to ask, what are the literary consequences of the Hasidic temperament, assuming that Bellow shares it. The question is framed by the polarities of order and disorder. Hasidism suggests the religious enthusiasm of eighteenth-century Protestant sects, an emotional phenomenon accompanied by a disorder of a kind fatal to sustained literary effort. Yet John Crowe Ransom, in a symposium on the state of American writing in 1948, found American literature constricted, rising out of tension and moral protest, whereas the condition of great artistic creation, he said, is a "kind of exuberance of animal spirits," a massive joy. Bellow, especially after his first two novels,

has displayed a plenitude of animal spirits, an ingenuity of invention, a richness of imagination. He has seized voraciously upon the cult of experience that Philip Rahv says begins for American literature with Strether's cry to Little Bilham, "Live, live!" Bellow has carried beyond earlier writers, who sought, according to Rahv, liberation from convention and taboo; he has sought liberation for the self. The lavish and disorderly characteristics associated with Hasidism may then be fruitful for literary achievement. And this is especially true when they combine in a literary personality who feels, as Bellow does, that the novelist may not know what order is but does know this: "A novelist begins with disorder and disharmony, and he goes toward order by an unknown process of the imagination. And anyway, the order he achieves is not the order that ideas have."

If *Augie March* is Bellow's most obvious expression of massive joy, it is not to be supposed that this book sprang without antecedents and foreshadowings from its author's mind. Bellow's critics tend to overemphasize the differences between that generous-spirited novel and the two shorter, more tightly organized books that preceded it. Looking back on the fiction Bellow has thus far given us, one can see that *Dangling Man* (1944), his first novel, leads a kind of subterranean life. While Bellow seems to succumb to despair and his protagonist seems to welcome self-immolation and self-effacement in regimentation, Bellow's persistent assumptions throughout the book are the constants that appear in all his work. In *Dangling Man* the burden of what Bellow says is that freedom is the necessary condition for man if he is to pursue his chief end as a man—the knowledge of himself; successful in his quest, man's energies may then be released in love. It may well be an over-simplification to say that all Bellow is encompassed in these three terms: freedom, identity, and love; but I submit that it may be a fruitful oversimplification. At the same time that the book looks forward to a positive statement of what most engages Bellow, it looks backward at certain modes of behavior and expression that Bellow wishes to reject. It becomes, in short, a document in the cultural history of the 1940's. Take, for example, the opening paragraphs of the novel. Joseph, the protagonist, who tells the story in the form of a journal, records at the outset an attack upon the code of the athlete and the gentleman which stipulates hardboiled reticence, banishes introspection as sentimentalism, and substitutes violent action for feeling and thought. The inner life of the mind

and the emotions must come first. The meaning of these passages, I would suggest, is that Bellow is turning away from Hemingwayism, away from an aesthetic of understatement in the novel which had been dominant for two decades and which was inimical to that treatment of experience which finds it necessary to discover and lay bare, with little restraint, the thoughts and emotions of its subjects. Bellow does not thus establish a style, but he clearly repudiates one, and his is only one repudiation among many that combined to diminish the influence of Hemingway on post-war literature.

A second note on cultural history centers in a scene in a restaurant where Joseph meets a member of the Communist Party who tries to ignore him: he is angry with Joseph, who has left the Party (before the opening of the novel). For Joseph, and for Bellow too, radical political thought is already in the past; answers are not to be sought in it. Here is a phenomenon representative of the sensibility of the times and illustrated in the whole vast bulk of novels inspired by the war. Indeed, politics of any kind as a subject for fiction, despite the dramatic potential in the clash of fascist and democratic ideologies, appealed to virtually none of the serious writers of Bellow's generation. To be sure, Norman Mailer and Irwin Shaw showed a sophisticated grasp of political issues in their war novels, but they do not bear out Edmund Wilson's generalization, made in his review of *Dangling Man*,[4] that many writers with liberal radical backgrounds "cannot refuse the challenge to stand up to the barbarism of the Fascists." That barbarism was more apparent to Wilson than it was to the young novelists.

It is true that at the end of the novel Joseph goes to his draft board and hurries his induction into the army. But he is not eager to fight the fascists. On the contrary, he feels himself overwhelmed by the society that wishes everyone to fight the fascists, that wishes everyone to recognize as the only reality a world in which men must fight. Joseph knows he lives in this world, but he lives also in a world of "ideal construction," which is "the one that unlocks the imprisoning self." Joseph lives, in other words, in two worlds, and is aware of the unbridgeable gap between them. The tensions in Joseph's life, then, are in part the result of being both inside society and outside. This dilemma he generalizes: all people struggle to free themselves; in all people the final quest is for the same thing—"the desire for pure freedom." If we could achieve what we would ideally like to be and have, then we would stop living exclusively for our own sakes.

Joseph, who early in the novel says he must "give all his attention to defending his inner differences, the ones that really matter," is determined to seek out his own identity: "But I must know what I myself am." When he attains this self-knowledge he is prepared to return to the real world from the ideal construction, and to be a citizen and a good man in it. For "goodness is achieved not in a vacuum, but in the company of other men, attended by love." Bellow has here expressed a sentiment in 1944 that he was to repeat in 1957, in the quotation from Simone Weil that I have already cited.

Joseph reaches for what Bellow was not yet ready, in 1944, to permit his characters to achieve. Joseph cannot reconcile his two worlds and he cannot exist as a whole man with dignity in the real world. Augie March could do both. Worse than this, Joseph cannot exist in his own independent world, carved out of his own inner resources of mind and will and sensibility. Intransigent in the face of real experience, Joseph tries to spin a life out of his own spirit, having the opportunity to do this when he is in suspension between a regular job and induction into the army. He fails, and his failure leads Reuben Frank to conclude that the ideological center of the book is "the bankruptcy of a metaphysically derived humanism." [5] It is true that Joseph aims at a life of reason and hopes to cultivate the ability to absorb suffering and pain without resort to any power outside himself. This is the humanism that Joseph cannot himself sustain and that his world will not permit him to enjoy. I accept Frank's view, as far as it goes, but I would add two thoughts. First, the reason for the bankruptcy of humanism is, I believe, its over-simplified faith in a rationalism that has no understanding of emotional needs. Second, Bellow did not choose a strong representative of that humanism by which to test its viability. Joseph is not a scholar or an artist; as an intellectual he is a dilettante. To throw the burden of proving the possibilities of humanism today upon such a character is to vitiate the value of the test.

Bellow is on sounder ground, I think, in drawing upon the alienation motif. Intellectual or not, Joseph has tried to find a sufficiency of inner resources and of intellectual independence to confront his world and lead a life of reason and disciplined feeling. But in the social vacuum in which he finds himself as a rootless man, he fails. One reason is that the society will not accept him, as it rejects the artist and the intellectual generally. Since these people do not perform, in its narrowest sense, essential and productive functions, they have no

status in the eyes of the respectable and productive members of the community. Or rather they have the status of children, tolerated and patronized by their elders who know a great deal more about the real bread and butter problems of life. Not being privy to the mystery of business and finance and not seeming to care about that mystery, these children are outside the pale. Upon them fall all the suspicions reserved by the in-group for dissidents, the breakers of images. To refrain from joining is to invite fear and hatred.

Joseph's brother and his family represent the middle class which is so inimical to the difference that Joseph would maintain in his quest for freedom and identity. Well-to-do and success-oriented, they search for security in a world that Joseph thinks has no future. His brother Amos cannot understand him, and his niece, taking her cue from the family attitude, treats him so shabbily that he is driven to hit her. Joseph encounters the same antagonism from respectable quarters when he goes to the bank to cash his wife's pay-check. The vice-president patronizes him—calls him by his first name—and, when Joseph cannot prove his reliability by giving an employer as reference, refuses to cash the check. Humiliation by the society is the price of standing outside it.

Another aspect of the alienation motif lies in the psychological reasons for Joseph's failure to sustain his own ideal life. His idleness tends to feed upon itself and has the effect of immobilizing him. He quotes Goethe: "All comfort in life is based upon a regular occurrence of external phenomena." The absence of regularity, like being jobless, robs Joseph of a place. By this I mean what I take it Marmeladov means in *Crime and Punishment*: not simply that a man must have a job or even a haven, but that he needs a sense of belonging to the community of men. For Joseph the notion of community is breaking down. As it goes, he begins to lose any feeling for the people around him. He quarrels with his friends and his wife; he becomes indifferent to people. The only one of his acquaintances he sees regularly is a dead-beat, as idle as he, who is worth mentioning because he is the first in the gallery of odd-balls to be found in Bellow's work. But he cannot really bear even this man. A growing sense of irritation overtakes him, and with it a spirit of contentiousness that he cannot control. Joseph has lost touch with the magnetic chain of humanity, the most serious sin in Hawthorne's lexicon. For Bellow and Hawthorne are alike in their reverence for humanity and alike in condemning the absence of love that permits a man to isolate himself.

Fiedler comments [6] on Bellow's recognition of man's essential loneliness as the state that leads him to rediscover his identity. He thinks this loneliness is a condition of the dissolution of any shared definition of man. But Bellow himself has denied that his work as a novelist is dependent on an agreed picture of man and the universe. Bellow's characters are lonely when they are deprived of love.

In this connection a comparison of the relation between Joseph and his brother Amos and the relation between Augie March and his brother Simon is illuminating. Amos and Simon are very much alike in their shrewd worldliness and success. Both have contempt for their ineffectual brothers. Joseph cannot accept his brother's inadequacies; he cannot credit Amos' good intentions. This relationship is ambiguous: it is never severed but it is always uneasy and almost always hostile. Augie, in the later novel, suffers terrible gestures of rejection from Simon. But he can surmount Simon's opportunistic and harsh treatment to make an outright declaration of love for his brother and to accept him, despite their differences. Augie, knowing love, the love for his brother and the love for his wife Stella, finds himself and maintains his independence. Joseph is borne down, cannot become the sovereign individual he wishes to be, and so is forced in the end to seek out in the army the supervision and regimentation that signalize his defeat.

The form of the novel, despite the inherent disadvantages of telling a story through successive recordings in a journal, is admirably suited to the main character and to the purpose of the novel. As Percy Lubbock remarked, any author who uses this device is "engaged in the attempt to show a mind in action." The solipsistic tendencies in Joseph's life—in the life of reason he tries to live and in the psychological aberrations that overtake him—are perfectly expressed in a technique that makes him the commentator on his own condition. On the other hand, Bellow seems to realize the limitations of his method, since he introduces a section on the "Spirit of Alternatives" so that Joseph may carry on a kind of interior dialogue. In this way, a second, opposing point of view can be presented in the novel. It is partly the fault of the method, furthermore, that no character emerges vividly. Joseph is interested pretty much in himself only, but paradoxically is not completely self-revealing. His wife, his relatives, and his friends are all dimly realized.

Bellow's first novel is organized nevertheless quite successfully in the Flaubert-James tradition, as Robert Penn Warren has pointed out.[7]

It is a manner that persists with the next book, *The Victim,* but thereafter Bellow wisely drops it. The economy of scene and tightness of structure seem compatible, in *Dangling Man,* with the intense introspection of Joseph; they seem compatible with the negative case for love, where we get the careful dissection of what it means to a man to be denied. The manner changes with *Augie March* because Augie is not demoralized and corrupted by a state of suspension; his emotional life is not brutalized and coarsened; his search for identity is not frustrated. Augie succeeds, and his success demands free and ample movement.

But before Augie comes Asa Leventhal of *The Victim* (1947). Joseph was a victim of undirected, almost static floating in the current of American life; he had no place. Asa the Jew is a victim, not merely of anti-Semitism, but of his own sense of insecurity, of his own conviction that he has muscled in on an alien world where daily his precarious position is in question. He is deeply anxious about his place. Both men feel keenly a sense of differentness: the intellectual as outcast and the Jew as outcast. And attendant upon their alienation are aggravation, exacerbation, maladjustment, and violence. Their condition is not simply a consequence of what society or other men have done to them; it is a result also—and this is of even greater importance to Bellow—of their own shortcomings. Neither man achieves a full sense of what it means to be a mature human being. Asa falls short of love and understanding and humanity. He is self-engrossed, but blindly, not in a way that will enable him to discover the self. His plight is a function of the anti-Semitism, real and imagined, that he feels engulfs him. Loaded with these disabilities and thus in the worst possible condition to do so, Asa is asked to consider the nature and extent of one human being's responsibility to another.

Not that Asa is a bad man. He wishes, as much as Joseph, to be a good man. When his sister-in-law, in the absence of her husband, summons him in a crisis of illness, he accepts the burden of responsibility. Later he thinks that the mother somehow blames him for her son's illness. His uneasiness leads him to reflect on what it is to be human, and he decides that it must mean to be accountable in spite of weaknesses. The idea has been broached in a conversation he has had earlier in which an old man, Schlossberg, has talked about acting. Schlossberg is in the novel to represent the concept of humanity that Bellow generally advances in his work and to provide a scale against which we may measure Asa's failure, as he himself does. Schlossberg,

a responsible man himself, tries to answer the question, what is human? In doing so, he rejects the scientific view that would seek to define man by quantification. For him, a human life is a great thing, because it has beauty and dignity. In another conversation he says, "I have to be myself in full." He conceives the full range of human possibilities—"my mind can go around the world"—and the stern limits—man is born once and he will die once. It is to the degree that Asa fails to measure up to Schlossberg's standards that he fails to be a good man.

Bellow's strategy in the novel is to deny Asa that definition of the self that man must achieve in order to become a responsible human being. The difficulties inherent in the self-conscious effort to discover one's identity are complicated by Asa's relations with Kirby Allbee, an anti-Semite who poses problems for him of responsibility and guilt which he cannot resolve. Allbee, a descendant of the New England aristocracy (one of his forebears was Governor Winthrop), accuses Asa of having deliberately caused him to lose his job. Asa at first denies the charge flatly, but later comes to a grudging and partial acceptance of it. At this point, Allbee, who is a virtually penniless and unemployable alcoholic, moves in with Asa. The latter is thus forced to pay for his guilt by living intimately with a man who despises him. The charged ambiguity of this situation lies in determining which of the men is the victim.

Allbee's view is that he is the victim at once of social determinism and social displacement. His predicament, he says, is the result of blind movement and has nothing to do with his own efforts. The individual is "shuttled back and forth. . . . Groups, organizations succeed or fail, but not individuals any longer." If no human agency is responsible for making the fate of individual men, it is difficult to see how any one man can be responsible for any other. What moral obligation, then, is Asa, a more or less successful man, supposed to have toward Allbee, if neither man has made the arrangements? Allbee attempts to get around this problem by making an argument based on the Old Testament. Asa, he says, must reject determinism as un-Hebraic. Asa must believe that if a man suffers, he deserves suffering, which comes to him as a punishment. Life itself is not evil, but man may be, thus bringing punishment down upon himself. This is the Jewish point of view, found everywhere in the Bible. By accepting it, Asa frees himself of any blame for Allbee's ruin. From Asa's point of view the difficulty with Allbee's argument is that Asa is not

sure whether he accepts it or not: he is confused and uncomprehending. Asa cannot establish a philosophical position or take the long view because he is submerged in his self, a frightened, insecure Jew.

If it is inconsistent of Allbee to use determinism as a protective rationalization for his own failure and at the same time to charge Asa with responsibility for his downfall, one must remember that Allbee is one of Bellow's plausible eccentrics, a mad man loose in the world with a perfectly straight face and an unencumbered right to pursue his peculiar fantasy. In this respect he is like the Negro in "Looking for Mr. Green," to mention only one other example, who has a fantastic plan to create twelve Negro millionaires each year by subscription. Nevertheless, the problem of determinism which he raises is one of Bellow's enduring preoccupations. Always aware of the possibilities for social and biological determinism, Bellow seems little inclined to choose between them and free will. His forbearance is neither indecision nor philosophical confusion. It is rather the result of a latitudinarian attitude toward his characters whose idiosyncrasies of belief he respects and who have, I suspect, been permitted to take the matter into their own hands anyway.

This issue of social displacement is allied to Allbee's determinism, since he is able to exonerate himself from blame by believing he has been drowned in an irresistible tide of Jews. They have cultivated in a metropolitan culture survival qualities which are totally alien to the Anglo-Saxon sense of honor and fair play. The gutter virtues of opportunism, shrewdness, and calculation come naturally to the Jew in the competition for money and power. Usurpation of economic domination is bad enough, but when the Jew begins to take over the culture, the full bitterness of his failure sweeps over Allbee. He resents Jews who write books about Emerson and Thoreau or sing Negro spirituals; they represent the degradation of his heritage. Actually, Allbee has abdicated his position of leadership in the culture, as he admits when he says that he is not living up to his ancestors. Asa is by no means in a position to set the tone and character of the culture. What Bellow seems to suggest is the traditional flux that marks the open, democratic society of America. The danger of this condition, which he emphasizes, is that it makes a sense of insecurity pervasive in the culture so that the culture seems, in its loss of continuity, to belong to no one.

Allbee's anti-Semitism must be seen in the context of his beliefs in determinism and displacement. The tactics in his attack upon Asa

vary from wheedling and cajoling to demanding and threatening, but the aim is always the same: to emphasize Asa's differentness and to crush him with a sense of guilt. His head is cluttered with stereotypes of the Jew. Jews do not drink, and they think all gentiles are drunkards; Jews resort not to violence to settle differences but to trickery. In addition, he makes a great deal of the cultural disorientation of the Jew in America. But none of these approaches is as bad as the way he eats at Asa's spirit once he has insinuated himself into the Leventhal apartment. He reads the intimate correspondence between Asa and his absent wife. In Asa's absence he brings a whore into Asa's bed. He turns on the gas and tries to kill himself and Asa as well. In all these ways he goes beyond anti-Semitism to violate the sanctity of the human heart, to destroy the integrity and privacy of Asa's inner being.

So it follows that Asa is a victim of anti-Semitism, but not the lily-white sacrificial lamb of social-consciousness fiction. He *is* guilty. He has contributed to Allbee's downfall out of his own sense of insecurity and his tendency toward paranoia, out of his own secret feeling that he is not worth much on the market, and even without knowing consciously that he is doing it. It is the frustration and fear inherent in Asa's very Jewishness, emerging in truculence and aggressiveness, that trip up Allbee and start him on his slide. The other side of Asa's offensiveness is the economy of compassion and of sympathetic understanding that Asa feels forced to practice. He is afraid of his decency and good impulses. At the end of the novel, after he has forcibly thrown Allbee out of the apartment, it comes to Asa that Allbee must have experienced unspeakable horrors, things that would have been fatal to him; that Allbee had made his crazy demands on him in order to delude himself because he was frantic with self-hatred. A self-possessed man, confident in his own judgment, would not, in the first place, have permitted Allbee to make real the kind of fantastic situation he had foisted on to Asa. In the second place, a secure man would have permitted his heart to be engaged by the miserable plight of a derelict like Allbee. Asa, a frightened man, could not afford compassion. His fear, his recalcitrance, his bellicosity—all these murder understanding and love.

Bellow's achievement in this novel is to have seen all around the theme of anti-Semitism in such a way as to elevate it into something of generalized significance. Or, to put it another way, Bellow understands that anti-Semitism is a superficial social phenomenon. He has

succeeded in getting at the profound psychological and sociological truths that lie beneath the surface of anti-Semitism. In this downgrading, so to speak, of anti-Semitism as a theme Bellow reveals the same hard-nosed tendency to rip through surface manifestations to the essentials that he does in *Dangling Man* when he has Joseph say the war is only an incident because it will change nothing important, that is, man's effort to find love and dignity. These fundamentals, in *The Victim,* are drawn together in Bellow's vision of American life as dynamic, where the clash between the new and the old constantly creates tensions. Bellow does not advocate any easy answer like social tolerance. Solutions, if there are any, lie in time, when men like Asa will have achieved selfhood.

In 1953 Bellow published *The Adventures of Augie March,* his first popular success. Explaining in the *New York Times,* for January 31 of the following year, how he wrote the book, Bellow begins and ends his account with a quotation from Robert Penn Warren about writing abroad "where the language is not your own, and you are forced into yourself in a special way." He comments on the paradox that, being away from home, he thought about home most of the time. One is reminded of Glenway Wescott in Paris remembering Wisconsin or Scott Fitzgerald in St. Raphaël finishing *The Great Gatsby.* In Austria, Italy, Paris, writing about Chicago before and during the Depression years, Bellow was in the tradition of the expatriate who had found Europe a stimulus to the examination of his native ground. But with Bellow there is a difference, or two differences. One is, as he says, that he was writing *Augie March* at a time when Americans were being told what they were and were not; as an American it was therefore a good time to look for a definition of the self. The other is that he sees himself self-consciously as rootless, or perhaps it is better to say as having roots everywhere. He is the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants and grew up in Montreal and Chicago. He wrote his novel in many places in Europe and the United States. It was a gesture meant to link the two continents, to show that he belonged nowhere and everywhere. He will not be condemned to a place, or a time either. "We are not born to be condemned but to live."

It is fitting that the author of *Augie March* should feel the necessity for self-discovery, should wander about on two continents, should exalt experience. Augie himself, the picaresque hero of his story, is an uncommitted wanderer upon the face of the earth, savoring experience for its infinite variety and cherishing his independence to seek it out where he may. He is full of the joy of living in a world

where the opportunity for experiment is practically limitless. For Augie, the doctrine of life is in the act, not in the thought; the life of reason must be investigated, but no finalities, no ultimate satisfactions or motives are to be found there. Yet Augie is not hostile or indifferent to ideas. In his scale of values he has simply placed ideas on a less than dominant level. Bellow has a conception of man so broad that ideas cannot dominate it. It is the imagination, which shapes experience, that launches Augie on "a campaign after a worthwhile fate," the discovery of self, love, and the joy of living. Augie is successful, so far as any human being can be, where Joseph and Asa of the previous novels have failed; his story is the positive statement of Bellow's most persistent and deepest convictions.

Augie's "campaign" suggests an activist course. His friend Padilla tells him he is too ambitious, by which Padilla means that Augie is reaching for ideal happiness and good. The sense of quest involves the sense of a directed will. It is by no means clear, however, that Augie is pursuing his fate with a clear-cut conception of what it ought to be. He is not a young man who knows exactly where he is going, because such a straightforward conception of experience—as though life could be arranged on a taut line—is foreign to Bellow's feeling for the vagaries of life. Most of the time, in fact, Augie entertains experience as it comes to him, in a mood of uncritical acceptance. He is receptive and tends to be passive. Bellow conceives him as happily adrift on the flux of life and easily susceptible to manipulation. Stella, the girl he eventually marries, sees that he and she are alike in that both are persons who can be used by others. The world of experience is spread all before him, and he feasts upon it. But he eats of it only to live, for his quintessential life is, like Gatsby's, his Platonic conception of himself. This he guards always.

The best example of Augie's duality—his passive acquiescence in the aims of others and his last ditch faithfulness to his image of himself as free—is in his courtship of Lucy Magnus, daughter of a wealthy family into which his brother Simon has married. Simon has urged Augie also to marry into this family, and Augie obligingly woos Lucy. But some stubborn will to resist, blindly to balk at being swallowed up, makes him slow in pushing on to marriage. When circumstances falsely cast him in the role of faithless lover, the Magnuses summon him for a solemn scene of rejection. "I was thrown for fair on the free spinning of the world," he says, and he likes it. He has lost a great deal of money. But he is freed from the threat posed by continued intimacy: that it will force him to betray himself.

In this duality, to put it another way, the warp of Augie's life is exposure to experience, as is apparent from the very beginning of the novel. When Grandma Lausch finds Augie various jobs as a boy, he comments, "Saying 'various jobs,' I give out the Rosetta stone, so to speak, to my entire life." Shortly after this, he begins to mingle with all kinds of people: intellectuals and students, criminals and street loafers. It is the pattern of his life to meet and know a vast variety of people. Bellow scatters with prodigal hand a huge sampling of humanity through the pages of his novel. With his taste for the bizarre and the *outré,* which he somehow manages to present as ordinary and credible—simply by assuming that it is—Bellow gives us a range of character and experience fully in the tradition of the picaresque novel, greater in its variety than the adventures of Captain Farrago and Teague O'Regan in *Modern Chivalry* or of Huck Finn and Nigger Jim. He has, as Arthur Mizener says, a "special sense of the strangeness of people." [8] Thus Augie has a lover who trains an eagle to hunt iguanas; he serves as general factotum to a many-sided, philosophical cripple conceived as a heroic, Napoleonic figure; he is cast away with a scientist who believes he has discovered the secret of life; he is research assistant to a millionaire who is writing a book on human happiness from the standpoint of the rich; he holds jobs as shoe salesman, dog currier, smuggler of aliens, labor organizer. In one of his uncollected short stories, Bellow's protagonist says he has "an idea that a man is bound to do everything in his lifetime." Augie has had a try at fulfilling this ideal, and all these apparently disparate experiences are made coherent and unified by the inexhaustible love of life that provides the initial and basic motivation for them.

One of his friends quotes to Augie:

> *Les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent*
> *Pour partir; coeurs légers, semblables aux ballons,*
> *De leur fatalité jamais ils ne s'écartent,*
> *Et, sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours: Allons!*

> This last was probably aimed at me and accused me of being too light of heart and ignorantly saying good-by. I seemed to have critics everywhere. However, for a cold day this had a very bright sun, the trains were passing in blackness over an embankment of yellow concrete, the kids were screaming and whirling over the whole vast play yard around the flagpole and in and out of the portables, and I felt especially stirred.

The passage speaks for itself in its sense of exhilaration; it is to be noted especially that this is an urban scene that moves Augie. Bellow, however, is not to be conceived as committed to a simplistic optimism about experience. Augie is made to say that he understands as well, "how much disappointment is in the taste of existence."

A man submitting, but submitting only so far, to a variety of experiences defines his own character. He wants to discover what possibilities are open to the human being. He is like the character who wanted to do everything in the short story I referred to above; that fellow banged an Italian on the head with a bottle, without provocation, in order to discover what it meant to do something hateful and lousy. Robert Penn Warren is thus wrong, I believe, in saying that Augie is a man who has no commitments. This judgment, to be sure, reflects Augie's spirit of independence and confirms Einhorn, the philosophical cripple, who says that Augie has opposition in him, a desire to offer resistance and say no. But it overlooks the rationale behind Augie's experimental mood in embracing such a variety of experience. Augie is trying to find out who he is, to realize his self, and to this task he is continuously and perseveringly committed throughout the novel. In the cohesive but criss-crossed pattern of his life, this quest is the woof. The constant threat to his independence is his passivity, since he is exposed to numerous "persons who persistently arise before me with life counsels and illuminations throughout my entire earthly pilgrimage." They are people who would subjugate his will and twist his personality into some facsimile of their own. He is the chameleon man, taking his coloration from the strong characters around him, but he is always in the end the stubbornly reluctant recruit. He admires Einhorn, whom he meets at an impressionable age, but he says, ". . . if I were really his disciple and not what I am. . . . ," because he has already learned to shun limiting loyalties.

The problem of maintaining independence in order to seek identity creates its greatest tensions when Augie falls in love. I have already indicated how he felt that the intimacy of marriage with Lucy Magnus might lead to falsehood, that is, to some distortion of his person made necessary by accommodations to marriage. Later, in a period of intensive self-examination he wonders if he is not totally confused, wanting to serve love and yet to preserve his independence.

The problem is insoluble, but laboring with it leads Augie to one of his most decisive insights into the nature of the self. He marries

the beautiful Stella and discovers that if love conquers all, there is plenty for it to conquer and go on conquering, always and always. The hard work that all people have is to maintain themselves in their present positions in the face of the burden they are carrying, the pretenses and adjustments they must make, the things they must remember and forget. Augie and Stella live in Paris where life is supposed to be *calme, ordre, luxe, volupté.* But he realizes that Stella, like all others, has work to do. Within herself she has to combat the world and all in it, to justify her existence. This is everyone's toil: "Every precious personality framed dramatically and doing the indispensable work." This conception of the self, seen in terms of dramatic conflict, struggling to preserve inviolate its own integrity, is Bellow's most profound statement about the nature of man and the relation of the individual to the world. In "A Father-to-Be," one of the stories in *Seize the Day,* the protagonist is in precisely Augie's position. He is struggling to preserve some sense of who he is, because he feels his own personality being drowned in that of his fiancée. Out of the general oppression that bears him down comes the sudden intuition that everyone "has some weight to carry."

In defining the self, Augie has occasion to draw a distinction between man and Mankind that reflects, I suppose, Bellow's reaction to the enterprises of society in his time. When Augie is in Mexico he runs into a man named Frazer, an intellectual he had known at the University of Chicago, who is working for Trotsky and who proposes to Augie a hare-brained scheme for the protection of Trotsky. Augie's response is "Please God! . . . keep me from being sucked into another one of those great currents where I can't be myself." Reviewing the book, Robert Gorham Davis [9] expresses dissatisfaction with the Trotsky episode, but I believe he misses the point. Trotsky is one of the great abstractions, he is Living History, he is important for Mankind, but he will eat up a single man. Later in the book, Augie meets Frazer in Paris. Frazer has been in military intelligence; he is now with the World Educational Fund. He is the emissary to the world of affairs, and he talks about Paris as the City of Man. In Augie's view Frazer is not alive as a man and does not recognize that others are so alive; Augie thinks Paris must be for men, for human beings like himself. His own, particular experience is always more precious to him than any group experience. When he is a C.I.O. organizer, he spends the Decoration Day of the Republic Steel massacre in bed with a lover.

> It wasn't even in my power to be elsewhere, once we had started. No, I just didn't have the calling to be a union man or in politics, or any notion of my particle of will coming before the ranks of a mass that was about to march forward from misery. How would this will of mine have got there to lead the way? I couldn't just order myself to become one of those people who do go out before the rest, who stand and intercept the big social ray, or collect and concentrate it like burning glass, who glow and dazzle and make bursts of fire. It wasn't what I was meant to be.

Late in the book Augie makes explicit the idea of quest for the self: "You will understand . . . that I have always tried to become what I am. But it's a frightening thing. Because what if what I am by nature isn't good enough?" Then he adds, "I will never force the hand of fate to create a better Augie March, nor change the time to an age of gold." To which his friend Mintouchian replies, "It is better to die what you are than to live a stranger forever." This determination in pursuit of an end recalls Gasset's definition of a hero as "one who want to be himself. The root of heroic action may be found then in a real act of the will."

The assumption necessary for the portrait of the hero thus becomes freedom of the will. I have already indicated how Bellow moves between the doctrines of passivity and activism in his depiction of Augie. He seldom permits Augie to make a specific statement about this philosophical conflict, which is, of course, the old question of freedom versus determinism, but other characters in the novel talk about it. A girl Frazer gets with child is determined to have an abortion, even if it kills her—and it almost does. But she knows what she wants: "You can't let your life be decided for you by any old thing that comes up." She is as eager as Augie to command her own destiny. Augie's brother Simon, in contrast, believes in biological determinism and explains what are to him Augie's sexuality and irresponsibility as a consequence of the same traits in their parents. Augie himself is led to reflect on this problem the first time he sleeps with Stella. He is helping her in a perfectly altruistic spirit to run away from an unpleasant situation when their car breaks down on a mountainside in the night. They give in to the circumstances, joyously, and Augie comments, "The inevitability that brought us together on this mountain of wet grass was greater than the total of all other considerations." It is about this incident that Augie says, "After much making with sense, it's senselessness that you submit to." The instincts

in the end determine action and dominate life, while the reason's weakness is constantly exposed and the will's efficacy thus doubted. Much later in the book, Augie finds himself in the company of the mad scientist who would use reason alone to save man and the world. But Augie knows that the scientist is a distorted personality because he has neglected the heart.

Such discussion is not designed so much to establish Bellow's philosophical position—and this it would be difficult to do because of apparent contradictions—as to clarify the meaning of the self. It is subordinate, in short, to the main business of the novel. So it is that, in treating the problem of realism and idealism, Bellow aims to show how this philosophical question bears on Augie's conception of man. In one discourse to himself, Augie appears to reject idealism, thinking that while everyone tries to create a world he can live in, the real world is already created and he will have trouble if his fabrication does not correspond to the real world. The problem here is the adjustment of the individual to the world. Later on, when Augie is in despair, he tells himself he is no worse than anyone else. Everyone pretends to be what he is not, hiding his real self behind a mask. Mere humanity, "disfigured, degenerate, dark," is as confused as he. Everyone invents a man who can stand before appearances, for to expose his real self is to be exposed to shame—a thought that seems to echo the existentialists. Each man tries to recruit others "to play a supporting role and sustain him in his make-believe." The leader invents a whole world, and this becomes his reality and the reality of his followers. Most people live in the invented world; they take their place in it and they are safe: they are types. But they mutilate themselves to fit some one else's idea of reality. Because he wishes to be an independent personality, Augie does not accept the invented world, yet he knows that he has constantly sought out from others protection against the chaos of the real world. Augie's preference, then, is philosophical realism, but he understands that he is not always strong enough for it. To live with it is to be alone in a confused place among creatures capable of great evil.

Augie's activities range from this kind of philosophical speculation to the stealing of books as a regular business enterprise, and his acquaintance ranges from University of Chicago instructors to uneducated Jewish immigrants. The demands made upon Bellow's ear and upon his verbal ingenuity and inventiveness are thus very great. He has chosen to confront his writing problem with what I shall call the

paradoxical multi-level style. Augie commands the language spoken by small-time Jewish fight managers as well as "a speech enriched by the dialectic and joyful intellectual play of Jewish conversation," as Fiedler has said of Bellow's style generally. Augie commands the language of the books he steals, being attracted particularly to heroic expression. He commands the language of business and of upper middle class society. But it is his whim, or maybe his failing, to mismatch stylistic level and social or experiential level. Giving a gutter experience heroic expression, he counts on paradox and unpredictability to convey the quality of his apprehension of life and people. What is ordinarily deemed an appropriate mode of expression is only infrequently Augie's choice, partly out of ignorance and partly out of sheer delight in paradox and shock. The style, then, is mixed. It has great range and splendidly rich resources. It is flamboyant and experimental. It pulsates with the same rapid and erratic beat that we have seen in Augie's life. In a word, Bellow has achieved an organic style in the novel: it fits his protagonist and it fits his theme. The style is Augie, who wrote the book, "not in order to be so highly significant but probably because human beings have the power to say and ought to employ it at the proper time."

The last word on *Augie March* must be a reaffirmation of its vitality. Here and there, indeed, Augie looks into the deep, dark pools of humanity. He recognizes potentialities for evil as well as good in human beings. Though he has found love in marriage to Stella, he is coming to some sense of its cost to himself. Whatever a man's condition in the scale of human growth and decay, Augie recognizes that he is still a man. Although he sees the bizarre and the grotesque everywhere about him, they simply add to his undiminished appetite for life. His characteristic posture is joyful. At the end of the book, a smile comes unbidden to his lips. He has met experience, he will go on pursuing it, and he will never permit it to overwhelm him.

In 1956 Bellow published *Seize the Day,* a volume containing three short stories, a one-act play, and a novella. The short pieces are variations on themes already announced in earlier work. "A Father-to-Be" shows how love is a cathartic experience, purging away the terrible pressures of urban life. Rogin, who feels he is forcing his "way through the spikes of life," is harassed particularly by money worries. The same problem of the fate of the individual identity when a man is in love—the question of separateness and union—is raised here as it has been earlier. The threat to personal identity and the capacity to

make one's own fate, posed by biological determinism, hover over Rogin as Simon March thought it hovered over Augie. In "Looking for Mr. Green" Bellow gives us other characteristic attitudes toward the city. In his urban world the surfaces of life are like very tough rubber, resilient but impenetrable; man bounces off them but he cannot get underneath them. The urban world, further, is in constant flux, and its law is deterioration and growth in a cycle so rapid that it brings chaos to human lives. This story also repeats the idealism of *Augie March*. Reality becomes that which people agree to accept as real, although there may be a larger reality which does not depend upon consent. Where life presents its impenetrable surfaces, the only way to survive is to accept the reality by consent and to eschew absolute reality. "The Gonzaga Manuscripts," without making the same philosophical point, nevertheless does bring home to us Bellow's feeling that communication between men is often virtually impossible because, either by chance or by design, men do not understand each other. This story is in the Jamesian tradition that Bellow followed in his first two novels. It contrasts the Old and New Worlds, with the American innocent dismayed by the distorted image of his country created by the atom bomb. The one act play, "The Wrecker," displays some of the dionysian energies of *Augie March* and repeats the belief in the cycle of the city. The protagonist of the play assumes the role of a hero, which is, he says, to destroy the links with the past; the hero "frees himself from what other men have done before him." Assertion of this male role leads to tension in the man's marriage, for until the end the wife tries to wrap her man in her possessions and her love.

The novella is the showpiece of the volume. "Seize the Day" is a story that seizes the heart, as it is an injunction to seize life. The strategy of the story is the same as that employed in *The Victim*: the protagonist is asked to pursue a perfectly legitimate and desirable goal, but he is an agent of cultivated disability and he runs toward his goal over an obstacle course where he himself is responsible for strewing about most of the obstacles. This is a strategy that creates great tensions and grows out of a sophisticated sense of the paradox and incongruity of human experience. Asa Leventhal wished to combat anti-Semitism, but he was in himself a cause of it; Tommy Wilhelm in "Seize the Day" wishes to grasp the life-principle, but his laziness, his bad judgment, his pride all work instead to bring him close to madness and destruction. The result is that when in the end

the goal is realized, no clear-cut victory has been won. The victory is tinged with ironic sadness if not indeed bathed in tears, tears perhaps that purge, but still tears.

Tommy Wilhelm, in his mid-forties, lives in the Hotel Gloriana in Manhattan, which caters mostly to old people who have nothing to do "but wait out the day." They are already dead. But Tommy does not want to be dead. Death threatens him, however, for the chaos of the world is reflected in his personal chaos. His life is going utterly to pieces: he has lost his job, his wife has left him, he is quarreling with his father, he is about to lose his last few hundred dollars in a speculation. This process of disintegration is aggravated by Tommy's nagging sense of the need to find out who he is. The alienation from his father began when he went to Hollywood and changed his name in futile pursuit of a career in the films. This venture was a bid for liberation, but it changed nothing essential. To know yourself is to know that the burden of your existence lies upon you, a mysterious weight which it is the business of your life to carry about. Man is assigned "to be the carrier of a load which was his own self, his characteristic self." Later in the story Bellow repeats this idea: ". . . since there were depths in Wilhelm not unsuspected by himself, he received a suggestion from some remote element in his thoughts that the business of life, the real business—to carry his peculiar burden, to feel shame and impotence, to taste those quelled tears—the only important business, the highest business was being done." This is what Augie realized about Stella and what Rogin intuitively grasped in the subway.

Reeling through his trouble-filled day, Tommy finds himself in the company of Dr. Tamkin the charlatan, who will cheat him in speculation in the commodities market. If it is true that Bellow ever knew Yellow Kid Weil, all that can be said is that Tamkin is no less incredible a con man, the most fantastic in Bellow's entire gallery of wild eccentrics, so crazy that he is sane and the truth is in him. He talks to Tommy about the real soul and the pretender soul. The tragedy of life, he says, is that the pretender soul is like society and it enslaves man, making the real soul sick and preventing it from loving and attaining the truth. Tamkin means what Augie meant when he said types mutilate themselves by conforming to someone else's notion of reality. And with Tamkin as with Augie, the primary goal is self-realization. With Tamkin such fulfillment takes the form of a kind of Transcendentalism: he writes a poem in which he exhorts

mankind to open its eyes and realize its greatness. He is a life symbol urging upon men the doctrine of carpe diem.

Tommy, filled with a sense of the pain of life, sickened at the world of business, borne down by the need for money, is hardly a man to grasp a positive life-principle. Tamkin understands the necessity, even the desire, to suffer, but he rejects suffering because it is not-life. Riding in the subway, Tommy, paradoxically, has an illumination, in the midst of his frenzy, in which quite suddenly he feels a great upsurge of love for everybody. Since man has the capacity for love, he must exercise it. This is what it means to be a human being. At the story's close, rejected by his father, tortured by his estranged wife, and cheated by Tamkin, he dashes wildly into the street and is pushed unexpectedly into a funeral home. There he begins to weep. "The source of all tears had suddenly sprung open within him, black, deep, and hot. . . ." The funeral music sweeps over him. "He heard it and sank deeper than sorrow, through torn sobs and cries toward the consummation of his heart's ultimate need."

Thus Bellow has arranged it that Tommy, the agent of multiple disabilities, the man most likely to fail, must reclaim our humanity for us. Tommy is a battered man whose very existence is witness to the half-truth proposed by Tamkin: that we must seize life and rejeet suffering. But the compulsive weeping does not mean, either, that Tommy has given way to self-pity. He has transcended that, to come to self-knowledge. The weeping reveals him as a human being and links him to humankind; it is the recognition that we must all carry the burden of personality. What is the heart's ultimate need? Love, of course, and this is what Tommy has been denied by his father and his wife and his children. To know one's need is to redeem it. Tommy's experience is in many ways the same as Rogin's in "A Father-to-Be." Rogin goes to his fiancée full of irritation and unrest, mostly as a result of a fantasy that the son they will have will not represent him and will scorn him. When he sees her, she greets him fondly and offers to wash his hair. As she pours the water over his head, it seems to him "it was the warm fluid of his own secret loving spirit overflowing. . . ." All his pressures are washed away in love. The release that Rogin experiences is the same as Tommy's, at bottom, for each man comes not to a physical realization but to a fulfillment in knowledge and spirit.

In all his work thus far Bellow has been moving toward a hedged affirmation: an insistence upon the importance and possibility of such

fulfillment with a recognition always of its cost. In qualified terms he has revived the cult of personality and, paradoxically, given us the clue to the social history of the post-war years. Preoccupied with what it feels like, what it takes, what it means to be a human being, Bellow has made man the vital center of his work. No guiding philosophical conception shapes his image of man; he is concerned with man alive. Augie says, in one of his introspective passages, that he seeks simplicity, and one is reminded of Thoreau's simplify! simplify!, and then of his famous declaration of faith "I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life. . . ."

So it is with Bellow, who wants no confining philosophy or myth, who has no patience with passing social phenomena, who finds the essentials of human experience in human beings seeking themselves and seeking love. And fleeing annihilation. That fate awaits the corporate, tabulated man whose identity has been surrendered. Bellow's fiction is surely a response to his need and ours to push back the many-faced Leviathan. It is a reaction against the loss of community in modern America. In its ultimate atomization it is social history.

Notes

1. Saul Bellow, "Distractions of a Fiction Writer," *The Living Novel: A Symposium,* ed. Granville Hicks (1957).
2. Isaac Rosenfeld, "On the Role of the Writer and the Little Magazine," *Chicago Review,* XI (Summer, 1957), 3-16.
3. Leslie Fiedler, "Saul Bellow," *Prairie Schooner,* XXXI (Summer, 1957), 103-110.
4. Edmund Wilson, *The New Yorker,* XX (April 1, 1944), 78.
5. Reuben Frank, "Saul Bellow: The Evolution of a Contemporary Novelist," *Western Review,* XVIII (Winter, 1954), 105.
6. Leslie Fiedler, *op. cit.*
7. Robert Penn Warren, "The Man with No Commitments," *New Republic,* CXXIX (November 2, 1953), 22.
8. Arthur Mizener, *New York Herald-Tribune Book Review,* September 20, 1953.
9. Robert Gorham Davis, *New York Times Book Review,* September 20, 1953.

THOMAS WILLIAMS:

Betsy and the Blackbird

An ounce of midnight seized upon by day,
A yellow eye; fiercer for being small,
As if the lust of some great, faded bird
Had been distilled to one bright vial of gall,
The wounded blackbird finds himself alone,
His cloud of violent comfort flown away.

Then lovely Betsy comes, all pink and gold,
And essence too: The years will turn her thighs
Diffuse and tolerant—perhaps. He knows
Only the blue, bland eggs that are her eyes,
As if he sees straight through them into sky—
Another sky; quite wingless and quite cold.

She really runs to love him; then she cries,
For she has always conquered with a word
Or with a kiss: This time she takes a stick,
And with a will she ravishes the bird,
Half out of fear— Where did she learn to fear
The vision she must poke out of his eyes?

Small midnight on the green and feather-blown
Soft lawn: A tiny rape, this putting-out
Of scorn.
One midnight did she wake and fall
From the brute beak of dream and shout,
Feeling the strange heart's rhythm gone,
Knowing the great indifferent wings had flown?

SUSAN SMITH:

The Bird is Ancient Foliage

The bird is ancient foliage. When you consider
The layers of down and over the down the feather,
Adding to that the beak and the dry wire feet
And the brittle eye beads and the leather
Over the marrowless bone and the beat
Of the heart—a mechanical cheat

You have the visible sign of instinct's grace.
That is: a clockwork toy that their whole race
Devised to sell in joke shops and delude
Life with a mask of itself in the nude.

Digressing in another direction is custom.
The visible sign of: the wineskin of wisdom,
Blood-bag people playing life for a fool
Bibbed before a bowl of his own drool.

ELIZABETH BARTLETT:

Ascetic

Be whatever you like
Close your eyes
On the desert a burnished stone
In the dripping sea, a jewel

Go wherever you wish
Bind your feet
Through the night where a wing has flown
Towards dawn where a leaf drops cool

Live however you would
Stay your blood
With the sky and the earth as friend
At peace with the mind and breath

Speak whenever you will
Seal your lips
Of this life proclaim time an end
In the next cry Nazareth

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SUMMER 1946: Austin Warren (on Lindsay), Katherine Anne Porter, Mina Loy, Richard Wilbur, Flannery O'Connor, Richmond Lattimore, Grover Smith, etc...$1_____

AUTUMN 1946: Bertolt Brecht (2 plays), Boris Pasternak, W. M. Frohock (on Sartre), Louis Aragon, Pablo Neruda, J. F. Nims, Reginald Moore, etc.....30c_____

WINTER 1947: Arthur Mizener (on Tate's 'The Fathers'), W. C. Williams, Mina Loy, R. B. Heilman (on Waugh), Henry Silverstein (on Hopkins), etc.....30c_____

SPRING 1947: J. F. Powers, Ray B. West (on 'Flowering Judas'), Daniel Curley, Richard Eberhart, Stanley Edgar Hyman, Esther McCoy, S. Raiziss, etc.....30c_____

SUMMER 1947: Norton Girault (on 'All the King's Men'), Kenneth Burke, Ruth Domino, Alfred Young Fisher, Robert Horan, Joseph Warren Beach, etc.....30c_____

AUTUMN 1947: Bertolt Brecht ('The Horatians and the Curatians'), Wallace Stevens, Frajam Taylor (on Crane), Elizabeth Berridge, Howard Moss, etc.....$1_____

WINTER 1948: Wallace Fowlie ('The French Literary Mind'), Lorca, R. L. Cook (on Melville), James Merrill, William Sansom, Kenneth Burke, etc.....30c_____

SPRING 1948: Francis Fergusson (on 'Oedipus Rex'), William Goyen, Margaret Webster (on Shaw), Klaus Mann, W. S. Graham, Radcliffe Squires, etc.....30c_____

SUMMER 1948: Robert M. Adams (on Pound), William Sansom, Vernon Watkins, Willard Maas, John Waller (on Keith Douglas), Mason Jordan Mason, etc.....30c_____

AUTUMN 1948: Hugo von Hofmannsthal (a novella), Agnes Macdonald, Carl Bode, John Arthos (on Faulkner), Roger Shattuck, Gudger Bart Leiper, etc.....30c_____

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SPRING 1949: Caroline Gordon (on Stephen Crane), R. W. Stallman (on 'The Secret Sharer'), Rilke, Joan Griffiths (on Waugh), Peggy Bennett, etc.....30c_____

SUMMER 1949: Irvin Stock (on Gide's 'Theseus'), James T. Farrell, William Humphrey, Sherna Vinograd (on Eliot), Robert Creeley, Neil Weiss, etc.....30c_____

AUTUMN 1949: Eudora Welty, Ralph Robin, R. L. Cook (on Frost), J. F. Nims, James Blish, Zygmunt Haupt, Howard Griffin (on Auden), etc.....40c_____

WINTER 1950: Delmore Schwartz, Wallace Fowlie (on Eluard), F. L. Overcarsh (on 'To the Lighthouse'), Louis Pauwels, Mortimer Slaiman, etc.....40c_____

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AUTUMN 1950: E. E. Cummings, Bonaventura Tecchi, Odysseus Elytis, Dezso Kosztolanyi; Sandra Wool & Leo Hamalian (essays on Eliot), etc.....40c_____

WINTER 1951: Bertolt Brecht ('A Little Organum for the Theater'), Joseph Bennett, J. M. Bradbury (on Ransom), Srinivas Rayaprol, etc.....$1_____

SPRING 1951: W. Y. Tindall ('Dante and Mrs. Bloom'), Parker Tyler, Lysander Kemp, Peggy Bennett, Mason Jordan Mason, Brewster Ghiselin, etc.....40c_____

SUMMER 1951: R. P. Blackmur (on James), Arthur Gregor (a play), George Anthony, Alwyn Berland (on Tate), Frank O'Hara, Daniel Curley, etc. . . . . 40c_____

AUTUMN 1951: Wallace Stevens, Donald F. Theall (on Eliot's 'Coriolan'), Rudolph von Abele (on Hawthorne), P. H. Lowery, Harold Norse, etc. . . . . 40c_____

WINTER 1952: R. V. Cassill (a novella), Howard Griffin (on Auden), Vernon Watkins, C. G. Anderson (on Joyce's 'Portrait'), Marjorie Brace, etc. . . . . 40c_____

SPRING 1952: Vernon Young (on Conrad's 'Nigger'), Jo Sinclair, H. R. Hays, Roberts Jackson; C. R. Wagner & Richard Eberhart (essays on Stevens), etc. . . 40c_____

SUMMER 1952: Hermann Hesse, Wallace Fowlie (on Rimbaud), Karl E. Zink (on 'Billy Budd'), Jascha Kessler, T. Weiss, Parker Tyler, Roy Marz, etc. . . . . 40c_____

AUTUMN 1952: Kenneth Burke (on 'Imitation'), Italo Svevo, Bobb Davis, Daniel Curley, Irvin Stock (on Gide and Wm. Hale White), Jim Walters, etc. . . . . 40c_____

WINTER 1953: William Van O'Connor & W. R. Moses (essays on 'The Bear'), Rex Worthington, William Jay Smith, Millen Brand, Howard Griffen, etc. . . . . $1_____

SPRING 1953: Valery Larbaud, Sherman Paul (on 'Walden'), Jules Romains, J. M. Bradbury (on Warren's novels), Albert Cook, John Logan, etc. . . . . 40c_____

SUMMER 1953: Wallace Stevens, Randall Jarrell, Warren Carrier (on Stevens), James Hafley (on 'Between the Acts'), Louis Zukofsky, etc. . . . . 40c_____

AUTUMN 1953: J. F. Powers, Kenneth Burke (on George Herbert), Randall Jarrell, Chayym Zeldis, Robert O. Bowen, Richard G. Stern (on Pound), etc. . . . . 40c_____

WINTER 1954: Melvin Backman (on Faulkner), Constance Pendergast, Frederick Bock, Marianne Moore, Herbert Gold, Wallace Fowlie (on Claudel), etc. . . . . 40c_____

SPRING 1954: Bertolt Brecht ('Puntila'), Isabel Bayley, William Jay Smith, Irvin Stock (on 'The Holy Sinner'), D. W. Evans (on Eliot), etc. . . . . 40c_____

SUMMER 1954: Odysseus Elytis, Kimon Friar (on Elytis), Irene Hay de Uribe, Mary D. Fowler, Edwin Fussell ('Hemingway and Mark Twain'), etc. . . . . 40c_____

AUTUMN 1954: William Eastlake, Hollis Summers, Wallace Stevens, Raymond Radiguet, H. C. Morris (on Crane's 'Voyages'), Norman Friedman, etc. . . . . 40c_____

WINTER 1955: J. S. Atherton (on 'Finnegan's Wake'), Frank Holwerda, Millen Brand, Mark Spilka (on Lawrence), E. E. Cummings, Dudley Fitts, etc. . . . . 40c_____

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SUMMER 1955: F. P. W. McDowell (on R. P. Warren's criticism), Daniel Marder, M. M. Liberman, Wallace Fowlie, W. B. Stern (on 'Benito Cereno'), etc. . . . . 40c_____

AUTUMN 1955: Kenneth Burke (on R. P. Blackmur), J. F. Powers, Yvan Goll, Byron Vazakas, Stanley Edgar Hyman, J. T. Beaty, Arthur Carson, etc. . . . . 40c_____

WINTER 1956: Alain-Fournier, Rosalie Moore, James Hafley (on Faulkner's 'Fable'), Parker Tyler ('The Metaphysical Passion'), F. G. Vliet, etc. . . . . 40c_____

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SUMMER 1956: George Seferis, Edmund Keeley (on Seferis), Cynthia Grenier ('Interview with Faulkner'), Grace Paley, Sister M. Maura, etc. . . . . 40c_____

AUTUMN 1956: Bertolt Brecht ('Socrates Wounded'), Isabel Gamble (on 'Mrs. Dalloway'), Ruth Stone, Herbert Gold, I. Traschen (on Dostoyevsky), etc. . . . . 40c_____

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